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THE LESSONS OF ABSCAM

In the bad old days of J. Edgar Hoover, the F.B.I. did not go in for undercover investigations of corruption. Hoover cultivated the F.B.I.'s reputation as the fearless and squeaky-clean foe of the forces of godless communism and gunslinging bank robbers.

To William Webster's credit, today's F.B.I. devotes much of its energy to investigating political payoffs and other crimes largely ignored in the Hoover era. But, as a just-issued A.C.L.U. report on *The Lessons of Abscam* makes clear, the F.B.I. has not yet learned how to do its job in a manner that comports with principles of due process of law.

This is not to deny that its task is sometimes difficult. The courts have not developed case law and Congress has not enacted guidelines that protect the innocent from becoming targets of highly intrusive undercover investigations. The report documents how easy it is for carefully conceived investigations to slip over into operations that are vulnerable to manipulation by those who have political or bureaucratic motives rather than valid criminal justice concerns.

It is exactly the subject of how targets of undercover investigations are chosen that is the main concern of the report. There should be evidence, the A.C.L.U. maintains, that a target is engaged in an ongoing pattern of criminal activity before an undercover investigation is launched.

The report also calls for continuing supervision of investigations to insure that safeguards are being respected, and it proposes civil damage remedies for victims of unwarranted undercover operations.

We join in recommending the standards proposed by the A.C.L.U. If enacted into law, they would permit the F.B.I. to maintain its focus on political corruption and would help assure that individual rights are protected.

RUSSIA'S FUTURE
Stephen F. Cohen

THE CORRUPT ARMY OF EL SALVADOR
Carolyn Forché
Leonel Gomez

FEDERAL AID FOR WORKER BUY-OUTS
Staughton Lynd

THE ARMY'S GERM-WAR TESTING
Leonard A. Cole

READING SUSAN SONTAG
Walter Kendrick

WHY THEY CAN'T RULE

THE RETREAT OF THE RIGHT

ALAN WOLFE

As recently as four years ago, the prospects for the right in the developed world were brighter than at any time since World War II. Joining Margaret Thatcher in the Commonwealth were conservative Prime Ministers in Australia and Canada. The United States was mired in the disillusionment with government that would bring Ronald Reagan his greatest starring role. One could not deny the outside possibility that Franz-Josef Strauss would join Giscard d'Estaing in refashioning continental Europe. Sweden's Social Democrats had lost control of the government to conservatives for the first time in forty-four years. And in Israel, Menachem Begin had come to power, as much because of domestic unease as foreign policy designs.

This will not be a conservative quarter-century; the rout of the right has clearly begun. Norway and Denmark are experimenting with conservative coalitions, but these are notable for being unable to touch entrenched social policies rather than for enacting new programs. Australia still has Malcolm Fraser, but he is, according to all polls, in deep political trouble. The Netherlands faces a stalemate that should result in a center-right government, but if it agrees to allow U.S. missiles on Dutch soil, it will face an uproar. Everywhere else—with the possible exception of an England condemned to the euphoria of winning a colonial war—the right has either been significantly defeated or is beating a hasty retreat from its principles. Consider the global picture:

☐ Canada threw out its right-wing government within a year, choosing to stumble along with Pierre Trudeau in the absence of any alternative.

(*Continued on Page 399*)

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LETTERS.

THE VALUE OF METHOD

Athens, Ohio

I was both surprised and pleased to see the comments of Jean Bethke Elshtain ["Time to Politicize the Schools"] and Norm Fruchter ["The Chipping-Off-the-Old-Block-Grant Strategy"] on the state of public education in the September 25 *Nation*. Having worked in a variety of forums to persuade progressives to engage themselves in the struggle over the schools, I am encouraged by the growing trend on the left to "politicize the schools."

However, I was dismayed by Elshtain's rather shallow suggestion that "schools of education must be phased out." I believe this would prove counterproductive in the long run. . . . After citing how dissatisfied everyone is with the public schools, Elshtain argues that to replace schools of education we would only need to turn prospective teachers loose to learn by "observing experienced teachers at work." I am afraid I must have missed the point. Are these not the same teachers Elshtain feels are doing such a poor job? She certainly does not mean that prospective teachers should observe university professors at work. Research has shown that we are among the worst offenders when it comes to preventing classroom inquiry and lecturing ad infinitum. (And none of us want students' parents making curricular decisions for or with us—a process Elshtain wants for public schools.)

Further, Elshtain finds schools of education to be "intellectual wastelands . . . systematically avoided by most bright students." Leaving aside a variety of questions (what is meant by "bright" students; what statistical evidence is there for such claims), two counterarguments come to mind. First, the most able students *may* choose academic areas promising the greatest financial rewards—which means they avoid education, political science and the like for chemistry, business and physics. Second, it is upon the work of education professors that Elshtain is able to build much of her argument. There are those among my colleagues who are not members of the intellectual elite. However, the most important work challenging education's support of the corporate state comes from schools of education (the list of authors is extensive—Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, Paul Olsen, Paul Violas, Clarence Karier, Walter Feinberg, Jean Anyon, Michael Young, Rachel Sharp, Geoff Whitty and Basil Bernstein). . . . What would Elshtain do with these in-house critical theorists who are working to change the system?

These arguments are not to deny the solid insights and valid critiques of Elshtain's piece. Rather, they are to suggest that she has many allies within colleges of education and public schools who, in her hurry to dismiss them as "group dynamics experts, amateur therapists or grown-up pals," are somewhat put off by her arrogant approach. Many of us have worked for years in the decidedly political struggle over the schools and are happy to welcome new blood to the fray. But we expect Elshtain to join us as a co-worker among imperfect equals, not as lord and maker of our destinies.

George H. Wood, Assistant Professor
College of Education, Ohio University

THE MADNESS OF METHOD

Tucson, Ariz.

I have just finished reading Jean Bethke Elshtain's clear analysis of public education and appreciate the way it encapsulates the problems facing schools today. I am in particular agreement with her on the quality of education in schools of education themselves. From my own experience as a student (at the graduate level, mind you) in one of those boring institutions, I know her observation that such schools are useless is correct. Indeed, they are worse than useless; they are counterproductive in their encouragement of the less-than-bright to believe that, by completing their studies, they are qualified to teach.

I wonder if the predominance of schools of education might be symptomatic of a larger trend in our society: that of mistaking "method" (i.e., form, the medium) for "content" (i.e., the subject, the message itself), not just in pedagogy but in all aspects of life. . . . Marshall McLuhan may have been diabolically right when he said that the medium is the message; that's one of the big problems of our increasingly rarefied, technological culture. The supremacy of method and the irrelevancies of "values clarifications" are meaningful only when they are removed from reality. Out on the streets, these things crumple. And an awful lot of kids instinctively know that.

William L. Scurrah

KINGSTON ON ETHNIC THEATER

Honolulu

Richard Gilman used his dislike of David Henry Hwang's plays as the occasion for pointing out the "lowering of standards" when "another minority is being heard from" ["Theater," *The Nation*, Nov. 21, 1981]: "The response ["critical and popular enthusiasm"] is chiefly to the *fact* [his emphasis] that, for the first time, a Chinese-American playwright is speaking his mind about his own people and America . . ."

The fact is that David Henry Hwang, as he himself generously acknowledges, is one of many Asian-American playwrights: Wakako Yamauchi, Jessica Hagedorn, Frank Chin, Philip Gotanda, Winston Tong, Momoko Iko, Ed Sakamoto, Ginny Lim, Rosanna Yamagiwa Alfaro. This is a list of just some of those who have had plays produced in New York City during the last decade or so.

Furthermore, these playwrights are not a "recent" phenomenon, nor do they follow "black, Chicano, feminist and gay writers." One of the most important contributions that Chinese-Americans have made to this country is theater. Historian Jack Chen is now organizing a photographic exhibit to open in San Francisco early next year—"The Chinese Theater on the West Coast, 1852-1982." This collection, which will also be part of a book, includes about 500 photographs, 300 of which document the Great Star Theater and its actors, actresses and productions from the early 1900s to the 1930s.

Gilman saw one Chinese-American playwright's work and put down all ethnic theater.

Maxine Hong Kingston

GILMAN REPLIES

New York City

Maxine Hong Kingston has read a great deal more into my review than was there, and has done some shrewd editing in order to bolster her accusations. When she juxtaposes my phrases "lowering of standards" and "another minority is being heard from," inserting a "when" of her own between them, the implication is flagrant that I think expression by minority groups causes artistic debasement. What I was saying, of course, was that the work of minority writers tends to be judged, in the beginning at least, by different criteria; that a political or ideological element is present in the response to that work; and that this has been true in the theater as well as in other cultural areas.

As for the accusation that I am ignorant of the history of Chinese-American theater: That such a theater flourished on the West Coast for a century and that there have been other Chinese-American playwrights before David Henry Hwang are indisputable facts, but beside my point. Which is that Hwang is the first such playwright to get wide attention in the media and, as such, represents for the general theater-going public Chinese-American expression as no playwright has before. Similarly, there were black playwrights before Lorraine Hansbury, but she was seen as the first who mattered, the first who made black theatrical expression felt in the wider culture. I have no interest in "putting down" ethnic theater; I do have an interest in putting down, if I must use that phrase, inadequate or unconvincing theater whenever I see it.

Richard Gilman

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double-spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Longer letters may be edited for reasons of space.

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EDITORIALS.

The Smear Again

If the campaign to smear and discredit the nuclear freeze movement goes on as merrily as it has in recent days, all may be well. Sordid accusations—such as the President's suggestion that antinuclear groups are controlled by the K.G.B.—always rebound to discredit those who make them.

A recent case in point. Seldom has a respected, influential newspaper debased itself as *The Washington Post* did on October 6: its editorial "Hot Words for the Freeze" alleged that two groups—the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Women Strike for Peace—are Soviet fronts or dupes. And seldom has such a newspaper abased itself as *The Washington Post* did on October 9: its editorial "The Peace Groups" unreservedly withdrew the allegations and an apology was tendered. The paper's ombudsman, Robert J. McCloskey, may regard this as an "extraordinary atonement," as he wrote in a subsequent column, but what is really extraordinary is that a paper of this stature should have joined in the McCarthyism in the first place.

Even Jeremiah Denton, the oafish Senator who originated the smear against the women's groups (with assists from the October *Reader's Digest* and the scurrilous *Information Digest*), has backed away from his position

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somewhat. His accusation of un-Americanism against Betty Bumpers, wife of the Senator from Arkansas and head of a group called Peace Links (which has representatives from Denton's target groups), must have ultimately seemed incredible even to its promulgator.

This does not mean we have seen the last of this old, old tactic. Like a jack-in-the-box, it keeps popping up every so often, a source more of amusement than alarm. But when it is not hammered firmly and quickly back into place, it ceases to look funny—which is why Frank Donner will be documenting the smear campaign in a forthcoming issue.

We take some pleasure from the fact that the time between the bold, empty accusations and the groveling, shamefaced apologies appears to be getting shorter. We hope, though, that readers—and voters—will observe the silence on this matter from the White House. Reagan has neither come to the support of the grotesque Red-baiters in their hour of need and humiliation with a repetition of his ugly charges nor offered any atonement, extraordinary or otherwise, for his statements.

In all fairness, he should either provide some evidence to back up his cavalier charges—difficult though that may be—or he, too, should apologize.

Rhetorical Device

Central America is now divided over how to avoid the region's first major modern war. What began as a simple, straightforward proposal has been confused by Washington rhetoric, and the resultant delay could be dangerous for everyone.

Mexico and Venezuela took a constructive and timely step last month in recommending talks between Nicaragua and Honduras to resolve the escalating conflict along their border. Panama supported the proposal. The State Department, however, has said that it addresses "only one aspect" of the region's problems and the United States has now become interested in a regionwide agreement. It suggested instead a plan that would include a ban on foreign arms and advisers in the area and would, in addition, outlaw "subversion"—e.g., Nicaragua's alleged aid to rebels in El Salvador and Guatemala. Central American countries supporting the U.S. initiative include its major military clients, El Salvador and Honduras, and frightened Belize and Costa Rica.

The two proposals may not be inconsistent, for in fact they address separable issues. But Honduras has been using the U.S. initiative as an excuse to put off serious bilateral negotiations with Nicaragua. Last week, Honduran President Roberto Suazo announced that he would not meet with Nicaragua's head of state unless the agenda was approved by other Central American and leading Caribbean countries.

The earlier Honduran response was even more revealing. Suazo was, said a spokesman, "too busy" to attend the proposed talks. Indeed, Honduras has been busy, as only poor countries drenched in military aid can be. It takes effort to expand one's armed forces by half and absorb a 300 percent increase in military aid over only two years; to upgrade one's navy; to cooperate with the Salvadoran Air Force in harassing and killing Salvadoran refugees; and, not least of all, to welcome the stream of U.S. military officers and training teams. It's also busy work to serve as a base for ex-Somocista National Guardsmen out to overthrow a neighboring government—the basic cause of the border tensions in the first place.

That border conflict is Central America's paramount problem, a short fuse potentially leading to a large-scale explosion. Bilateral negotiations should not be clouded by demagogy over Nicaragua's purported involvement in other countries. If the Hondurans are "too busy" to talk seriously now, they are likely to be far busier fighting a war later on. In criticizing and bypassing the Mexico-Venezuela proposal, the Reagan Administration seems to be more interested in winning some rhetorical war of its own than in saving lives in Central America.

Funding Apartheid

Pure gall. Now that the International Monetary Fund's annual meeting in Toronto is over and done with, South Africa is trying to obtain a $1.1 billion loan through the back door. Pretoria made a formal request for the easy-term loan earlier this month after downplaying suggestions at the Toronto meeting in September that it would need a financial bailout. At a press conference on October 5, Treasury Secretary Donald Regan said the Reagan Administration would judge the loan strictly on its economic merits. I.M.F. sources told Jim Morrell of the Center for International Policy in Washington that they understand this to mean the United States will instruct the American director of the I.M.F. to support the loan at a meeting scheduled for November 3.

If approved, the $1.1 billion loan will be the largest ever received by South Africa from any source. And for what purposes will the country use the money? It cannot be a coincidence that the sum is equal to the increase in South Africa's military expenditures from 1980 to 1982. As the London International Institute for Strategic Studies reported in its most recent *Strategic Survey*: "The costs to South Africa of carrying the war to her neighbors, and particularly her highly aggressive campaign in Angola, were substantial. Her defence budget rose by 30 percent, to a record level of almost $3 billion for 1981/82."

The last time South Africa was allowed to dip into the I.M.F. kitty, in 1976, it took $464 million to pay off the $450 million increase in its defense expenditures over the preceding few years. Given the criticism the I.M.F. received on that occasion, few observers thought South Africa would dare to make another request this year, despite evidence that a drop in world gold prices and the effects of the worldwide recession have made it difficult for Pretoria to meet its foreign debt obligations.

When rumors of the South African approach to the I.M.F. circulated earlier this year, critics of the apartheid regime responded. On September 5, twenty-two members of

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Congress asked Secretary Regan to oppose any South African loan request.

The formal position of the United States and the I.M.F. has always been that loan decisions must be made on economic—never political—grounds. But the fact is that the United States has a history of pressuring the I.M.F.'s executive board, where it has an influence far beyond its 19 percent of the votes, to favor loans to countries it supports and to cut or deny loans to those it doesn't. In July 1981, for example, U.S. director Richard Erb persuaded the fund's executive board to approve a $36 million compensatory financing loan to El Salvador—even though I.M.F. staff economists had refused to recommend its adoption and the directors representing most of the major nations of Western Europe had accordingly opposed it. Conversely, the United States has successfully opposed loans to countries it disapproves of, such as Grenada, Vietnam and Nicaragua.

Clearly, a double standard is at work, which in the long run can only undermine support for the I.M.F. both here and abroad. South Africa's latest request should be rejected; it is designed for nothing more than financing the military defense of apartheid.

Heeere's... Ronnie!

In recent weeks, as unemployment figures climbed higher and higher, President Reagan hit the campaign trail, in person and on the air, with what seems to be a grim determination to use humor to deflect criticism. When the number of unemployed, for instance, reached 10.1 percent of the work force, he said, "It was 7.4 when we started. Going to 10.1 makes it 2.7 that has occurred since we've been here. And I am willing to accept responsibility for the 2.7 if those others will accept responsibility for the 7.4."

Very funny. As a public service we asked our resident expert to speculate as to where this trend might lead. —The Editors

ANNOUNCER: *The Bob Hope Comedy Special* originally scheduled for this hour has been canceled so that we may bring you President Reagan's press conference. Here he is...the President of the United States!

THEME: "Thanks for the Memory."

REAGAN: Good evening, my fellow Americans. This is Ronald "Broadcasting-to-You-from-Recession, U.S.A." Reagan. I'm glad to be here tonight standing in for Bob Hope because, believe me, it's better than standing on the unemployment line. (Laughter) Say, how about those October unemployment figures—10.1 percent! And that's only the people who are still looking for work! (Laughter) The Bureau of Labor Statistics says the 1.6 million people who have given up job hunting don't count as unemployed. Why, if this recession goes on long enough, the unemployment rate will be zero. *Nobody* will be looking for work! (Laughter)

But seriously, folks, nobody has more compassion for the jobless than I do. I remember looking for work in the 1930s in Hollywood, but I came through. I got a new agent! (Laughter)

But I wanna tell you, the Democrats deserve most of the blame for this recession. If they'll take responsibility for the huge unemployment under Carter, I'll take the rap for the little additional unemployment under me. (Laughter) Now, any questions? Sam?

REPORTER: Recently, you signed the Export Trading Company Act, saying it would create "hundreds of thousands" of jobs. Why didn't you mention that the act was introduced by the Democrats under Carter?

REAGAN: I don't blame the Democrats for *everything.* (Laughter) Andrea?

REPORTER: You criticized the Democrats for allowing interest rates to go up to 21 percent, but don't you support the same monetarist tight-money policies for controlling inflation that brought on high interest rates?

REAGAN: You'd better ask Jack Kemp that one. (Laughter) Yes? No—the black fellow.

REPORTER: Last week, campaigning in Texas, you took credit for the big stock market rally, as you did for the one in August. Most experts attribute the rallies to a prediction of lower interest rates and the Fed's loosening the money supply—in both cases, due to the recession. So if you take credit for lower interest rates and higher stock prices, don't you have to take credit for the recession too?

REAGAN: As I explained to another fellow recently, shut up! (Laughter) Is that your tie, sir, or did you cut yourself shaving? (Laughter) Take two Extra-Strength Tylenols and call me in the morning. (Laughter) Say, how about that stock market! My broker's so optimistic he's buying Braniff shares. (Laughter) Sarah?

REPORTER: Mr. President, would you say that prosperity is just around the corner?

REAGAN: No, I wouldn't say it; Herbert Hoover already did. (Laughter) You remember Herbert Hoover—the G.O.P.'s Jimmy Carter? (Laughter) Helen?

REPORTER: Thanks for the memory, Mr. President.

THEME: UP AND OUT. RICHARD LINGEMAN

Sovieticus

So much of what we know about the Soviet Union is reported through a haze of cold war rhetoric and ideological stereotypes. And yet such skewed wisdom shapes our decisions as a nation on everything from the hot school lunch program (can we afford it?) to the nuclear freeze (can we not?).

In an effort to get at the underlying meaning of contemporary developments in the Soviet Union, we have asked Stephen F. Cohen, a professor of politics at Princeton University, to write a series of monthly columns for us over the next year. Cohen, a frequent visitor to the Soviet Union, is the author of several books on Soviet affairs, including *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution, The Soviet Union Since Stalin* and the forthcoming *Soviet Politics and History Reconsidered.* His articles have appeared in *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The New Republic* and other periodicals. His first column appears on page 390.

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SOVIETICUS.

STEPHEN F. COHEN

The Siberian pipeline controversy in the Atlantic alliance is an international *Hamlet* without the Prince. The real drama, and possibly the tragedy, will be played out in Moscow.

President Reagan's campaign to stop the natural gas pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe could affect the outcome of the most important debate in Soviet politics today: Should the Soviet Union move toward or away from the West?

On one side of this bitter dispute are reform-minded Russians who argue that progress requires more political, economic, scientific and cultural "bridge-building" to the West. On the other are a growing number of xenophobic Russians, nurtured by the Stalinist experience and a resurgence of traditional nationalism since the 1960s, who see all Western influence as a "cesspool" of corruption and subversion and as the source of the country's problems, from unrest in Poland to falling Slavic birth rates and nonconformist children in the U.S.S.R. Espousing a truculent Russophilism, they want to close off the opening to the West, which has been growing larger since Stalin's death in 1953, and return the Soviet Union to its autarkic ways behind an imperial iron curtain.

This is no peripheral issue; it is a deep-rooted and potentially fateful struggle over the future of the Soviet Union. Echoing nineteenth-century quarrels between Westernizers and Slavophiles, the present debate over a Western-oriented or an iron-curtain Russia divides leaders, dissidents and ordinary citizens alike. It underlies a muted controversy inside the Politburo and the political establishment over détente. In popular culture, it pits ancient cults of *Rodina*, or the Motherland, against modernism.

Beneath the surface, the clash is often acrimonious, as I have witnessed repeatedly. Two middle-aged officials, both Communist Party members and neither Jewish, quarreled at a private gathering. One insisted: "To save us from our own traditions, from people like you, we need more of the West." The other replied: "You and our Zionist scum would sell Russia's soul for Pepsi-Cola."

In the early 1970s, it seemed that the Western orientation would prevail. Despite strong opposition, Khrushchev had knocked a large hole in iron-curtain Stalinism at home and opened cooperative relations with the citadel of the West, the United States. The Brezhnev government, while reversing other Khrushchev policies, pursued that opening to the fuller détente of the 1972 Nixon-Brezhnev accords. Soviet lines to the West seemed firmly laid, including trade, scientific exchanges, emigration and arms talks.

But the Western orientation has suffered a cascade of foreign and domestic defeats since 1974. The Jackson-Vanik Amendment reduced Soviet-American trade and emigration to a trickle. American grain embargoes, boycotts, technology bans and renewed drives for military superiority displaced first the spirit of SALT II and then the treaty itself. An arc of border crises from Afghanistan and Iran to Eastern Europe, exacerbated by the specter of a Sino-American axis, made Stalin's fortress strategy seem safer than Brezhnev's bridge-building. Events in the Middle East revived "world Zionism" as an anti-Semitic synonym for everything Western. Poland's economic crisis demonstrated the "perfidy" of Western credits.

Iron-curtain Russophilism has gained new force in Soviet politics as a result of these and other shattered "illusions." It is now a clamorous opposition to the whole opening to the West and a contender for power. It is entrenched in powerful party and military organizations and in the K.G.B. and is trumpeted daily by influential newspapers and journals. The bridge-building Brezhnev leadership appears to be on the defensive. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko expressed its lament and its vulnerability in June: "The current American Administration is very successfully blowing up bridges, one after another, that were built over decades."

Reagan's antipipeline campaign could deal Soviet Westernizers an even worse blow. The 3,500-mile gas line symbolizes everything iron-curtain Russophiles despise: a permanent opening to the West, the selling of Russia's treasures for foreign cash and financial dependence on the outside world. Above all, Reagan's campaign undercuts the Westernizers' essential argument that stable Soviet-American relations are possible because American anti-Sovietism is merely an electoral tactic always abandoned by latter-day Presidents, such as Nixon, for "businesslike relations." Reagan's willingness to jeopardize the NATO alliance and apply sanctions even against American-owned companies in order to "punish" the U.S.S.R. proves, Russophiles now can argue, that American Sovietophobia is an organic obstacle to a stable opening to the West.

Completion of the pipeline over American obstructions, as is likely, will give Soviet Westernizers one fallback position—an opening to the West without the United States. That position is being encouraged by Western European editorials protesting Reagan's measures and dissenting from his Manichaean view of the "Soviet danger." As Brezhnev emphasized hopefully in late September, détente has "deeper roots" in Europe than in America. But given the obsessive importance of the United States in Soviet thinking and the fall of Schmidt's pro-détente government in Bonn, that position may not offset growing anti-Western influence in determining power and policy after Brezhnev.

Should we care about this internal struggle over the Soviet future? Clearly, the American hard line on the pipeline could foster a more lasting Western European estrangement from the United States. But there is also a worse prospect. Reagan's crusade "to prevail" on the pipeline issue abets the political fortunes of the most xenophobic, militaristic, pogrom-minded forces in Soviet politics. A Russia isolated again from the West would be a nuclear superpower driven back upon its most despotic traditions, resentments and anxieties. Such a development would help no one. Its first victims would be what we profess to care about in foreign affairs—human rights, Eastern Europeans and a safe world.

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ARTICLES.

EL SALVADOR—I

The Military's Web Of Corruption

CAROLYN FORCHÉ AND LEONEL GOMEZ

The institutional identity of the Salvadoran Army was formed in bloodshed. In 1932, when the people of El Salvador first rose in rebellion, the army slaughtered what we have painstakingly calculated to be between 20,000 and 25,000 people. The *matanza* (massacre) left a legacy of fear that remains to this day.

In the succeeding years the power of the army has grown. Thanks to the largesse of the United States, which endowed El Salvador with some $16.7 million in military aid between 1946 and 1979, the army has become better trained and better equipped and has developed into a formidable force in Central American terms. Since 1979 the United States has lavished an additional $398.4 million in military aid and $257.9 million in economic aid (and sponsored some $372.9 million in multilateral aid) that the military has been able to tap. With this measure of economic independence, the army has established its own "military culture," insulated within Salvadoran society, an *imperium in imperio*—hermetic, accountable to no one, a predatory elect.

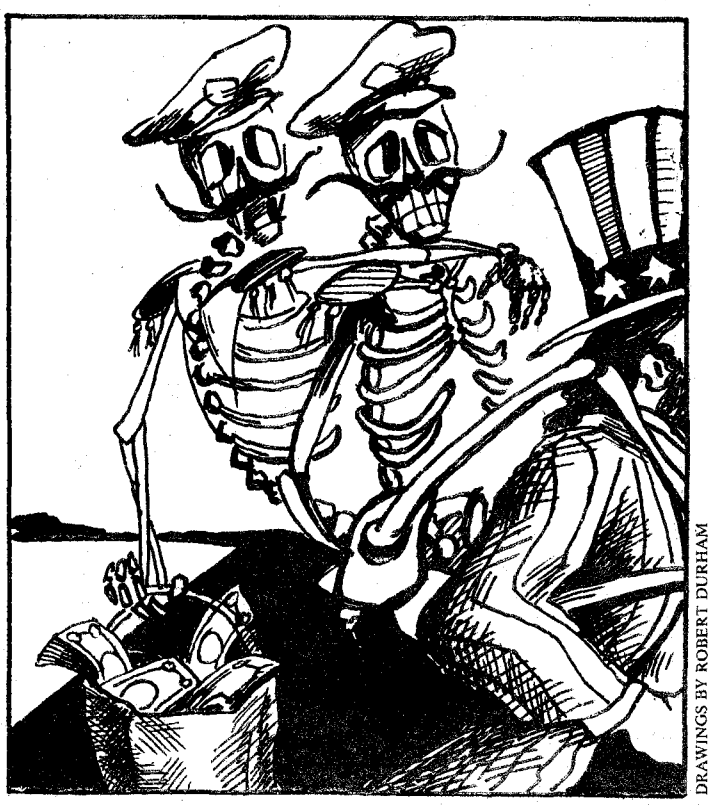
Young men enter the Salvadoran officers corps to acquire power and money. There are 500 officers in the security forces—the army, National Guard, National Police and Treasury Police—more than 90 percent of whom attended El Salvador's military school. Each officer belongs to a *tanda* (graduating class) and each *tanda* has a president. During their thirty-year careers, the officers seek contacts and form alliances with members of other *tandas*, using them to prepare for political power. In past elections, no matter which party received the most votes, the military candidate won. The outgoing president would choose his successor, and together they would assemble a coalition of officers from one major *tanda* and several allied *tandas* to enjoy the spoils of office. The *tanda* system, whose sole objective is the accumulation of wealth through criminal means, remains in power today.

The Salvadoran Army is held together not so much by anticommunism, though that sentiment is strong, as by a vast network of corruption which now controls the country's nationalized banks, 15 percent of its best farmland, all export-import activities and a good portion of U.S. aid. A few examples suggest the nature of this corruption.

☐ In 1976, police officers in Mount Kisco, New York, arrested Manuel Rodriguez, then the chief of staff of the Salvadoran Army and the man who was assumed to be El Salvador's next president. Two Mount Kisco detectives had been working undercover, posing as Mafia figures. Rodriguez approached them, offering to sell millions of dollars' worth of armaments that had been shipped to El Salvador by the United States. According to the detectives' report (Case File No. S-124), "the total monetary value of the arms we were to purchase through the subjects in the following year would be $30,000,000 and include missiles, aircraft which would be equipped with heavy armament, all types of automatic weapons and ammunition." One of the detectives, Sgt. Robert Cercena, later added, "Rodriguez told me that he was the same as us, thinking we were Mafia." The Salvadoran officer was sentenced to two consecutive five-year terms in a Federal detention center; after two and a half years he was deported and now lives in an elegant section of San Salvador.

☐ According to the Congressional testimony of Robert White, former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, last February, "There are reports that I consider reliable that some military officers are selling arms before they even get out of the crates to the revolutionaries, because at this point a number of military officers are seeing the end of the road and they want to make sure they have something left when they have to flee."

☐ James Ronald Richardson, an American citizen touring the country, was killed by Salvadoran security forces



DRAWINGS BY ROBERT DURHAM

Carolyn Forché is a poet and an associate of the Center for Investigative Reporting. She covered El Salvador between 1978 and 1980. Leonel Gomez was the deputy director of the Institute for Agrarian Transformation under Rodolfo Viera. After several attempts on his life, he fled El Salvador and has applied for political asylum in the United States.

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while in their custody. Ignacio Lozano, the Ford Administration's ambassador to El Salvador, said the embassy undertook an investigation of the case. But, he later testified to the House Subcommittee on International Organizations, "we felt that we had great difficulty in getting Washington to focus on this particular case, which we considered to be of extreme seriousness." When the Carter Administration took over, the investigation was ended and a freeze on impending loans lifted. It seemed to be a clear and unfortunate signal to the Salvadoran Army that it could operate with impunity against citizens of the United States on its own soil and that the human rights policy need not be taken seriously.

☐ José Rodolfo Viera, the first *campesino* president of El Salvador's Institute for Agrarian Transformation, the government agency in charge of the land reform program, attempted in 1980 to expose an example of army corruption. He had discovered that the properties the institute had bought before he came to office in October 1979 had been overpriced by at least $40 million—some had actually been sold to the government twice—with a cut of the inflated price going to the original landowners and even more going to members of the leading *tandas*. Viera went on national television to expose the overpayments. The government did nothing. On January 3, 1981, Viera and two American land-reform advisers were gunned down in the restaurant of the Sheraton Hotel in San Salvador.

After more than a year and a half of inaction, amid increasing international pressure, the Salvadoran government in September charged National Guard Lieut. Rodolfo Lopez Sibrian and Army Capt. Eduardo Avila with directing the crime. After flunking F.B.I.-administered polygraph tests, Avila disappeared and Lopez Sibrian was ordered released by a judge who claimed there was "insufficient evidence"; both men are closely tied to former Maj. Roberto d'Aubuisson, head of the Constituent Assembly, whose powerful *tanda* now controls the army garrisons. The Salvadoran military is unlikely to move against its own, so deep is the institutionalization of its corruption, no matter what the United States may direct it to do.

It was the consistent pattern of abuses of human rights by the military that prompted Congress to demand that further American aid be tied to State Department certification of reforms. The Reagan Administration has twisted itself into many different knots in trying to live up to that provision, and its most recent certification report on El Salvador (July 27) attempts to reassure Congress that progress is being made. "Although serious human rights problems continue to plague El Salvador," the report says, "and although progress in this area has not been as great as hoped, it is our conclusion that the strong private and public statements made on behalf of human rights by the leadership of the government of El Salvador [show that it] is making a concerned and significant effort to comply with internationally recognized human rights."

Yet even the new provisional President of El Salvador, Alvaro Magaña, admits that "it is a difficult and complicated matter to control abuses by security forces." One recent example was reported in *The Washington Post*. A Green Cross volunteer was repeatedly tortured in the headquarters of the National Police: "In one torture session, the victim was strapped to a rotating wheel, similar in function to the medieval rack. . . . He was beaten severely and forced to inhale lime." (According to Elliot Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, such events should be viewed in the context of "a steady improvement in [El Salvador's] human rights performance, especially on the part of the National Police.")

The United States seems to be in a bind. On the one hand, the inability of either side to achieve a military victory suggests the likelihood of a protracted war—which in turn would mean an unending Salvadoran demand for American aid both to continue the fighting and to keep the officers happy in the lucrative business of running the country. On the other, if the war goes on for a long time and the economy continues to suffer, the army may face greater opposition in the countryside or may collapse from within as a result of its own corruption, leaving Washington with only a few absentee oligarchs for its allies.

Interestingly, it is a spokesman for the rebels who suggests the dangers that might arise if the army collapses. "The best guarantee [of American interests] is to avoid the total defeat of the army," says Roberto Roca, one of the five *commandantes* of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (F.M.L.N.). "We're calling for negotiations before the collapse of the army."

If there is ever to be a settlement in El Salvador—and we believe a cease-fire is possible at this moment—the future status of the army will have to be carefully determined. F.M.L.N. leaders are willing to accept the "institutionality" of the Salvadoran Army, but they insist that it conduct a "self-purge"—specifically that it rid itself of the upper

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echelons of corruption: the minister of defense, the heads of the Treasury Police and the National Guard, and the infamous Col. Nicolas Carranza, former vice-minister of defense. In addition, of course, d'Aubuisson would have to remove himself from the Constituent Assembly.

The people of El Salvador have learned much over the years from the spectacle of a brutal military and an intransigent oligarchy—and American alignment with those interests. They will not forget, but they are willing to seek political solutions. Perhaps this is the moment for the Salvadoran Army and the United States to reclaim a measure of moral influence. □

EL SALVADOR—II

Books to Fill the Information Gap

To provide additional background information on El Salvador, we asked one of our regular Latin America specialists to review the pertinent books published during the last year. Elizabeth Farnsworth has written widely on U.S.-Latin American relations and was co-author of the "Dispatches" column in The Nation. *She recently won the Freelance Writing Award of the Media Alliance in San Francisco for her journalism over the past five years.* —*The Editors*

ELIZABETH FARNSWORTH

When the Carter Administration first decided to try to avert a revolution in El Salvador in mid-1979, it looked as if events were unfolding in an all-too-familiar sequence. Some surprises were in store, however, particularly the rise of the movement to oppose American involvement in that country, which emerged earlier and was more broadly based than comparable movements in the past. That opposition created a remarkably fertile debate on U.S. policy in Central America—including unexpected contributions from analysts who share Washington's Russophobia but see risk in its current course—and has at last inspired a slew of useful books to fill the gap of information on El Salvador readily available in English.*

El Salvador: The Face of Revolution is, in my view, the best book published so far on the Salvadoran crisis and its background. Robert Armstrong, a lawyer and former Peace Corps volunteer in El Salvador, and Janet Shenk, a longtime staff member of the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), have written voluminously about El Salvador in recent years—mostly in NACLA's bimonthly *Report on the Americas*. This book builds on their earlier writings. It is anecdotal, enriched by poems, photographs and tables. The authors' distinctive, intimate voice is at its best when describing specific events—a weekly meeting of a Christian community in a remote village, for example. A patronizing tone can creep into their writing—"In this century, there are those who have declared themselves revolutionaries. The best of them are scientists. They are humble before the phenomenon which they study and of which they are a part"—but fortunately this sort of arch lecturing is infrequent.

Tommie Sue Montgomery's *Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and Evolution* covers much of the same ground. But Montgomery, a political scientist who spent eleven months in El Salvador interviewing more than 100 people, excels in chronicling the seemingly endless cycle of coup and repression that began in 1932 and that by 1979 had left the government of Carlos Humberto Romero without legitimacy, precipitating the young officers' bloodless overthrow of that year. Her history of that coup is the most complete I have read. The book contains photographs and tables of economic data; it is a good book, but it suffers from trying to cover too much material and is sometimes clumsily organized.

Cynthia Arnson, a Latin America specialist and a visiting fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies (and a frequent contributor to *The Nation*), has since 1980 published the elusive specifics of U.S. military aid to El Salvador in a series of I.P.S. "Updates," concise gems of research which

BOOKS REVIEWED

EL SALVADOR: The Face of Revolution. *By Robert Armstrong and Janet Shenk. South End Press. 284 pp. $7.50.*

REVOLUTION IN EL SALVADOR: Origins and Evolution. *By Tommie Sue Montgomery. Westview Press. 252 pp. $22.50. Paper $10.95.*

EL SALVADOR: A Revolution Confronts the United States. *By Cynthia Arnson. Institute for Policy Studies, Transnational Institute. 118 pp. $5.95.*

COMMUNISM IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. *Edited by Robert Wesson. Hoover Institution Press. 177 pp. $10.95.*

SOVIET STRATEGY IN LATIN AMERICA, Washington Papers #93. *By Robert S. Leiken. Praeger and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University. 124 pp. $6.95.*

THE CRISIS IN CENTRAL AMERICA. *AEI Foreign Policy and Defense Review*, Vol. IV, No. 2. *Edited by Howard J. Wiarda. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. 36 pp. $3.50.*

CENTRAL AMERICA: International Dimensions of the Crisis. *Edited by Richard E. Feinberg. Holmes and Meier. 280 pp. $7.*

*Until 1980 the best sources were Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza: El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932*, University of Nebraska Press, 1971; David Browning, *El Salvador—Landscape and Society*, Oxford University Press, 1971; Stephen Webre, *Jose Napoleon Duarte and the Christian Democratic Party in Salvadoran Politics 1960-1972*, Louisiana State University Press, 1979; and Alistair White, *El Salvador*, Westview, 1973.

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reveal the growing U.S. commitment to a military victory over El Salvador's guerrillas. *El Salvador: A Revolution Confronts the United States* stems from this earlier research. Short, straightforward and clearly narrated, it is a basic history of El Salvador and of U.S. involvement in the current crisis. The book lacks anecdotes and telling details, but the important information is there.

The great strength of these three books is that they show the human face of the Salvadoran left, of those unpublicized and patient organizers behind the guerrilla war. To know the left, they say, we must learn the histories of the guerrillas, of the mass groups known in El Salvador as "popular organizations" and of the center-left political parties that played key roles in the 1979-1980 juntas. For these authors, the popular organizations are unique in Salvadoran history and the key to the guerrillas' successes.

The People's Revolutionary Block (B.P.R.), for example, which was formed in 1975, "was the first of a new kind of organization that quite literally would revolutionize the concept of politics and political participation in Salvadoran life," write Armstrong and Shenk. The B.P.R., the People's Action Front and the People's Leagues (LP-28) "were profoundly democratic, allowing workers and peasants, students, clergy and professionals to participate, many for the first time, in political discussions or decisions. They meant an alternative to vanguard or reformist parties, to electoral coalitions and parliamentary blocs."

The popular organizations brought together the mass base that has kept the guerrilla struggle alive. This is no intramural conflict among elites, as some would have us believe (Gabriel Zaid, for example, *Dissent*, Winter 1982). Leoncio Pichinte, head of the LP-28, finished sixth grade and then worked as a dishwasher, bartender and construction worker. Facundo Guardado, secretary general of the B.P.R., is a former field worker. Juan Chacon, who headed the B.P.R. until he was killed along with five other leaders of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (F.D.R.) in November 1980, had also been a field worker.

Though each popular organization had ties to a guerrilla group, in the early years they worked quite separately. Well into 1980, Armstrong and Shenk note, the popular organizations "persisted in their belief that an unarmed mass movement of the people—perhaps modeled on Iran—could bring down the government; they were unprepared to take the final step towards armed struggle, and the guerrillas, in the winter of 1980, were not yet prepared to incorporate so many into their ranks." But the terrible repression of 1980 forced the popular organizations underground, and by early 1981 the guerrillas and the F.D.R. (which united the popular organizations and the center-left parties) had formed a joint Political-Diplomatic Commission. The F.D.R. accepted the armed groups as its "vanguard."

And what of that vanguard? According to Montgomery, many of its members came from the Catholic Church. Salvador Cayetano Carpio, who left the Salvadoran Communist Party in 1970 at age 50 to build the Popular Liberation Forces, had studied at the Conciliar Seminary. Many among the People's Revolutionary Army (E.R.P.) had been Christian radicals in the 1960s.

Whatever their religious roots, the guerrillas suffered from what Arnson calls "militarismo," relying too much on bombings, kidnappings and assassinations in the early years. They also were rent by internal divisions, which in 1975 led to the murder of revolutionary poet Roque Dalton by one faction of the E.R.P. Both Armstrong and Shenk and Montgomery describe this dark side of the guerrillas' history as the stumblings of infant organizations which found their balance when the military groups and the popular organizations began to work together. The guerrillas' liberated zones, with their simple democracy and their schools and clinics, presage El Salvador's future, these authors believe. They may be overly optimistic.

Before returning to El Salvador in 1973, Dalton lived for a time in Cuba, and he wrote: "I belong to two countries/ Cuba/and my own." Armstrong and Shenk quote the poem, but none of these three books tell us much about Cuba's recent connections with El Salvador's left. They would have benefited from some discussion of Cuban-Central American relations, especially since attacks on Cuba form the core of the Reagan Administration's policies in the region.

William M. LeoGrande, director of political science at American University, writes of these relations with sym-

"A BRILLIANT, SORROWFUL EVOCATION OF A MOST ANXIOUS AGE. Fascinating, rueful, epic, ambitious and complex." —Vincent Canby, The New York Times

"I believe if that would have come out at the time of the trial, there would have been no trial. . . . Maybe if those four for acquittal would've argued their point, we probably would have went to their side."
—Vincent H. Shaw, juror who voted for conviction at the first trial of Alger Hiss
—from THE TRIALS OF ALGER HISS

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pathy for both Cuba and the Central American left in his chapter on Cuba in the new book from the Hoover Institution, *Communism in Central America and the Caribbean.* The Sandinists in Nicaragua received only a few crates of arms from Cuba, according to LeoGrande, partly because Cuba wanted to avoid giving Washington a credible rationale for intervention. As to El Salvador, "although the size of the shipments [is] a matter of some controversy," he writes, the Cubans have aided the guerrillas and they did increase their logistical support in late 1980 and early 1981, as the Reagan Administration claims. But the flow of arms was never very large, and it has ebbed since then. In LeoGrande's view, Cuban aid is not a significant factor in the Salvadoran struggle. But, he says, Cuba might come to Nicaragua's assistance in the event of a war with Honduras, and that would dramatically change the Central American picture.

In the debate over U.S. policy in El Salvador, the Administration has few outright defenders, even among those who share its Manichaean world view. Three new books from conservative think tanks, including the Hoover Institution book containing LeoGrande's essay, are remarkably critical of Washington's simplistic and militaristic policies.

Robert S. Leiken, director of the Soviet-Latin American Project at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, is the most articulate proponent of a position argued in these books: that current U.S. policies are actually facilitating Soviet and Cuban designs on the region. "Fears of renewed U.S. hegemonism under President Reagan have impeded progress toward collective security" in Central America, he writes in *Soviet Strategy in Latin America.* "The Soviet Union's greatest strategic asset in Latin America, even greater than Cuba, is anti-Yankee sentiment." Leiken has appeared frequently before Congressional committees to argue that Washington should back a political settlement in El Salvador that would include all factions of the left in order to prevent the guerrillas from becoming dependent on the Soviet bloc.

Other analysts are more oblique. Robert Wesson, a professor of political science at U.C.L.A. and a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution, worries that U.S. support of "unsavory" regimes in Central America will turn Americans against policies truly vital to their country's security. "What happens on American campuses is important for the long-term strength of the United States," he argues. "It is thus essential to uphold vital interests in ways broadly acceptable . . . to the American people."

At the heart of the criticism from those who share some of the Administration's basic assumptions is a healthy realism about the limits of U.S. power and a sense of resignation about the nature of radical change in Central America. That resignation—the belief that the revolutionary challenge is too profound to be easily manipulated from Washington—is a new phenomenon that deserves attention. It is evident in several of the essays in a recent issue of the American Enterprise Institute's *Foreign Policy and Defense Review* edited by Howard J. Wiarda, and in the contributions of conservatives in a new book edited by Richard E. Feinberg, *Central America: International Dimensions of the Crisis.* Feinberg was the Latin America specialist in policy planning at the State Department from 1977 to 1979. His useful and politically diverse book covers subjects ranging from Mexico's Central America policies to a bold comparison by James R. Kurth of "hegemonic systems," including the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, Britain in the Middle East and the United States in Central America.

These conservative critiques are indicative of the Administration's failure to build support for its policies even among its own natural allies. The Administration's softened rhetoric in recent months (Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Thomas Enders's August 20 speech in San Francisco, for example, which emphasized the local roots of the Salvadoran conflict) is intended at least partly to convince the friendly detractors to come back on board.

But the new rhetoric is also intended to confuse. As opposition to U.S. policies in Central America has grown, U.S. operations have increasingly flowed into covert channels. Along with the visible war, a hidden war is under way. In the future we will need a new spate of books to describe that. Meanwhile, these books hold the clues to how it all began. □

THE LESSON OF REPUBLIC RUBBER

Federal Aid for Worker Ownership

STAUGHTON LYND

The Republic Rubber plant on Albert Street in Youngstown, Ohio, was operated in the 1970s by Aeroquip, a subsidiary of the Libby-Owens-Ford conglomerate. The plant made rubber hoses. In August 1978, the parent conglomerate shut the plant.

A joint committee of former managers and hourly employees asked Aeroquip whether it would be willing to sell the plant to them. The company said yes, gave the committee an option to buy and set a price of $2 million.

Six former supervisors invested $100,000 in stock of the new company. The Dollar Bank of Youngstown loaned $1.35 million, guaranteed by the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce. The Urban Development Action Grant program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development provided $750,000 through the City of Youngstown, and the Small Business

Staughton Lynd is a lawyer working with rank-and-file steelworkers in northeastern Ohio and has been involved in several worker-ownership projects. This article is excerpted from his new book, The Fight Against Shutdowns *(244 pp., $9.95), to be published next month by Singlejack Books, Box 1906, San Pedro, California 90733.*

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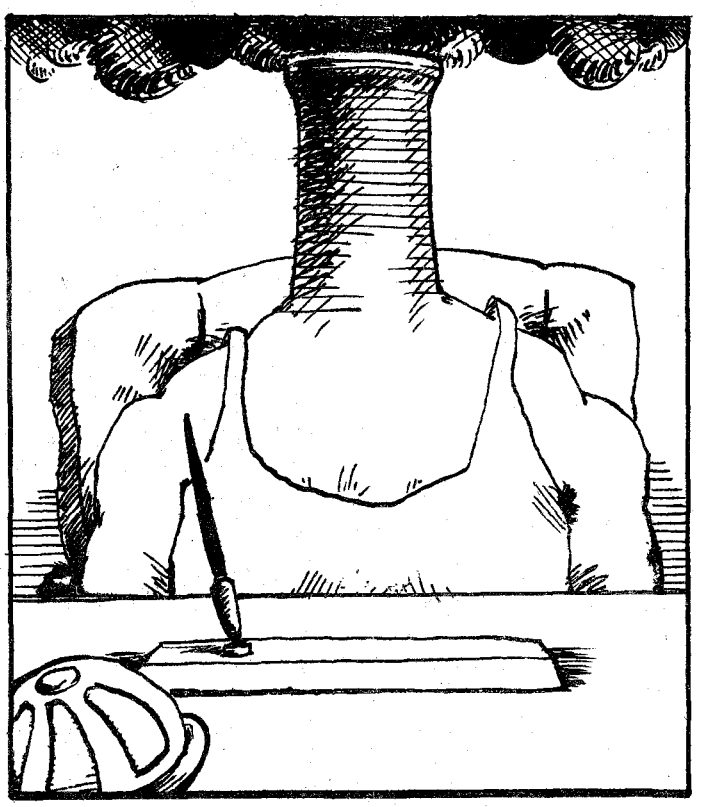
Administration provided another $500,000. The new enterprise was thereby able to pay $2 million for the plant while reserving $700,000 for working capital.

Republic Rubber is a successful example of employee-community ownership made possible by a financial package of employee stock purchases, Federal grants and Federal loan guarantees. The lesson of that experience, which will be increasingly important as other towns attempt to solve the problem of plant closings with employee buy-out plans, is a simple one: worker ownership, particularly when capital requirements are high, is possible only with massive Federal help.

Other examples of employee-community ownership in the United States teach the same lesson. Steffi Domike, who worked at U.S. Steel's Clairton Works, has studied the producers' cooperatives in the Pacific Northwest plywood industry. These enterprises represent by far the strongest example of worker ownership in the United States: between 1942 and 1956 they produced about one fourth of the industry's product. Domike found that during the first half of the century, the plywood industry was characterized by unchanging technology, relatively skilled labor and low capital requirements. When E. E. Westman organized the first cooperative in 1921, he sold 125 shares for $500 down, $500 due, mostly to or through his Scandinavian friends. By 1964, however, the cost of a new plywood plant had risen to more than $5 million. As a result, the cooperatives' role in the industry has been declining and it is unlikely that any new cooperatives will be formed.

That lesson is not necessarily popular. Many Americans, including many American workers, believe that anything that requires Federal aid will be bureaucratically managed from Washington and should be opposed for that reason. These people would turn their backs on the idea of worker ownership requiring massive Federal money.



I think that is a mistake. The Federal financing needed to make employee-community ownership a reality does not prevent such an enterprise from being managed in a democratic, decentralized way, with workers making most of the decisions.

We should get out of our heads the notion that Federal involvement means bureaucratic control from Washington. It is possible to take Federal money and place it in the hands of enterprises that are both locally managed and nationally supervised. One example is the Tennessee Valley Authority, at least as it was originally envisioned. Another is the national Legal Services Corporation, for which I work.

Congress appropriates money for the corporation, which then allocates more than 95 percent of this sum to offices in the field. Each field office is managed by a combination of local lawyers and local clients. The field offices are supervised by the national corporation, which puts out regulations and monitors the offices' work to make sure the regulations are being followed. In the case of Legal Services, the "product" is free legal service for those too poor to afford private attorneys. But the same management model would work for other kinds of products or services.

Frank O'Brien, former president of a steelworkers' local in Pittsburgh, has come up with the idea of a Monongahela Valley Authority as another example of how a plant with employee-community ownership could be locally managed.

O'Brien has described his idea this way:

"We should think about forming an industrial development authority and running the mills ourselves. . . .

"I think back to the time when the Port Authority was born. Pittsburgh Railways was the big operator transporting people in the city of Pittsburgh. They ran into a financial bind. So the Port Authority was formed, taking in all the bus companies in Allegheny County as well. It bought up the railway and the bus companies because people still had to be transported.

"Recently they decided to close down the J&L [Jones & Laughlin steel company] hot strip mill. A thousand people lost their jobs.

"A couple of Sundays later the mayor was out to our father-and-son Communion breakfast at St. Stephen's in Hazelwood. He made a little speech and then he opened it up for questions.

"So I got up. I said the mayor had better start worrying now about the U.S. Steel mills, that when they build that plant in Conneaut they're going to shut down every plant up and down the river.

"He said, 'Well, what would you do?' I told him, 'You, and the county commissioners, sit down and form an authority, like the Port Authority. We can run the plants ourselves.'"

Of course it is true—as I found out working in the unsuccessful campaign to buy the Lykes steel mill in Youngstown a few years ago—that absentee government bureaucrats can

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be as unhelpful as absentee corporate bureaucrats. We should have expected as much. It should not have surprised us that under the Carter Administration, the Economic Development Administration was on intimate terms with steel industry executives and hostile to the proposal for employee-community ownership. We were naïve to have imagined anything else was possible.

But that failure does not diminish the need for social control of investment decisions in the steel industry. Nor does it weaken the argument that the most effective form of social control is some kind of public ownership. The lesson to be drawn is that so capital-intensive an industry as steel requires Federal financing, and this financing will be forthcoming only when the political complexion of the national government has changed.

In my view, worker ownership or something like it will be necessary in the steel industry in the long run. Private industry is not going to give American society the modernized steel mills it needs. The only long-range solution will be for the government and workers, joining together, to do the job. □

AMERICANS AS GUINEA PIGS

The Army's Secret Germ-War Testing

LEONARD A. COLE

On December 22, 1976, Edward J. Nevin 3d was browsing through a newspaper while waiting for a train to his San Francisco law office. A reporter had just unearthed information that the Army had secretly conducted a germ warfare test over San Francisco in 1950. The bacteria had been implicated in the infections of several people and the death of one. Midway through the article, Nevin read that the deceased victim had been a retired pipe fitter, a patient at Stanford University Hospital. He died there on November 1, 1950, and his name was Edward J. Nevin.

"I suddenly realized that they were talking about a story very close to me," Nevin recalls. As he learned the details of his grandfather's death, he says, "I felt incredible shock." Shortly afterward, Nevin met with some of his relatives: "Everyone agreed that the government had exceeded all legitimate bounds in its effect on their lives." The sixty-seven survivors of the first Edward Nevin sued the government for $11 million.

The case was tried last year before a Federal judge in San Francisco. Evidence was presented that the Army had blanketed the San Francisco region with a microorganism called *Serratia marcescens* and that the outbreak of disease had begun four days after the test. Witnesses testified there was a "strong probability" that the Army's bacteria had killed Nevin's grandfather.

The judge ruled against the Nevin family, accepting the government's contention that the relationship between the test and the death could not be proved thirty-one years later. The case is now on appeal.

The Nevin trial offered a revealing look into the Army's secret program of bacterial testing, which was carried on for two decades before it was ostensibly halted in 1969. Worried about the effects of lethal germs that might be sprayed by the Soviet Union on an unsuspecting American public, the Pentagon had decided to unleash its own, supposedly harmless, bacteria into the air and trace the germs along their windblown journeys until they settled into the lungs of American citizens. During the years the Army experts were measuring air currents and the survivability of bacteria, no precautions were taken to safeguard the survivability of the millions of people exposed.

The dangers of such a program were outlined by one expert called by the plaintiffs, Dr. Stephen Weitzman, who explained that "there is no such thing as a nonpathogenic bacteria." So-called nonpathogenic bacteria can cause life-threatening diseases, he said, especially in "compromised hosts"—that is, elderly people, newborn babies, people who suffer from diabetes, lung disease, heart failure, cancer and the like. "In these kinds of patients so-called nonpathogenic bacteria commonly cause illness and death," Dr. Weitzman emphasized.

Critics of the test were numerous, yet the scientist who had been in charge of it was adamant about its safety and importance. Dr. Charles Phillips, former director of the physical defense division at Fort Detrick, Maryland (the Army's center for biological warfare research), testified that as far as he was concerned, *Serratia marcescens* is harmless. If he were still in charge, he said, he would spray San Francisco today. In saying this, he ignored mounds of evidence that *Serratia marcescens* can be a killer. Indeed, as far back as 1952 a secret memorandum prepared by the Army revealed its concern that these bacteria were causing disease.

There is some comfort in knowing that Dr. Phillips has retired, but it is difficult to be sure about the Army's present policy on so-called "vulnerability tests" involving bacteria. The Reagan Administration's budget for chemical and biological warfare stands at just over half a billion dollars—up from $157 million in 1980—but most of its details are shrouded in secrecy. Only the high priests of the Administration know if such tests are being planned or will be renewed, and they aren't telling.

Recent conversations with government officials and a review of available documents leave doubt that the public can discover whether or when it is going to be sprayed again. According to Alexander M. Capron, executive director of the President's commission on bioethics, under present rules the Army could be spraying and the public would not know.

At Senate hearings in 1977, the Army explicitly did not rule out further testing. Lieut. Col. George A. Carruth of

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the Army's chemical and biological defense division testified that the Army might well find "a specific area of vulnerability that takes additional tests." Now that is a comment with a wallop. But none of the senators bothered to ask who will decide whether and when to test, which bacteria will be used or what protection—if any—will be provided to the public.

This is particularly pertinent because it was revealed at the hearings that the incidence of illness suddenly increased in some areas near the tests. The Army's reaction would have made even its most dedicated apologists squirm. Coincidence, the Army insisted. But when Senator Richard Schweiker asked if a monitoring system had been established "to check on whether pneumonia-like illnesses occurred in test areas such as this, where the rate tripled in the test year," Army spokesmen became momentarily aphasic. Brig. Gen. William Augerson finally volunteered that he was unaware of any monitoring system. "Everyone made an assumption of the innocence of these organisms," he explained.

Over the years the Army's germ tests were carried out in any number of ways—organisms pumped into buildings or sprayed into the street from moving cars—but one of the most bizarre experiments involved releasing bacteria into the New York City subway system. Thanks to a Freedom of Information Act suit by the Church of Scientology, the Army released its report on that test in 1980. The document is wonderfully instructive.

Replete with maps, tables and anecdotal bluster, the seventy-one-page report details how the Army attacked New York City from June 7 through June 10, 1966. *Bacillus subtilis* was dumped into the heart of the subway system in midtown Manhattan during peak travel hours. More than a million people were exposed, many breathing in enormous numbers of the bacilli during the four-day period.

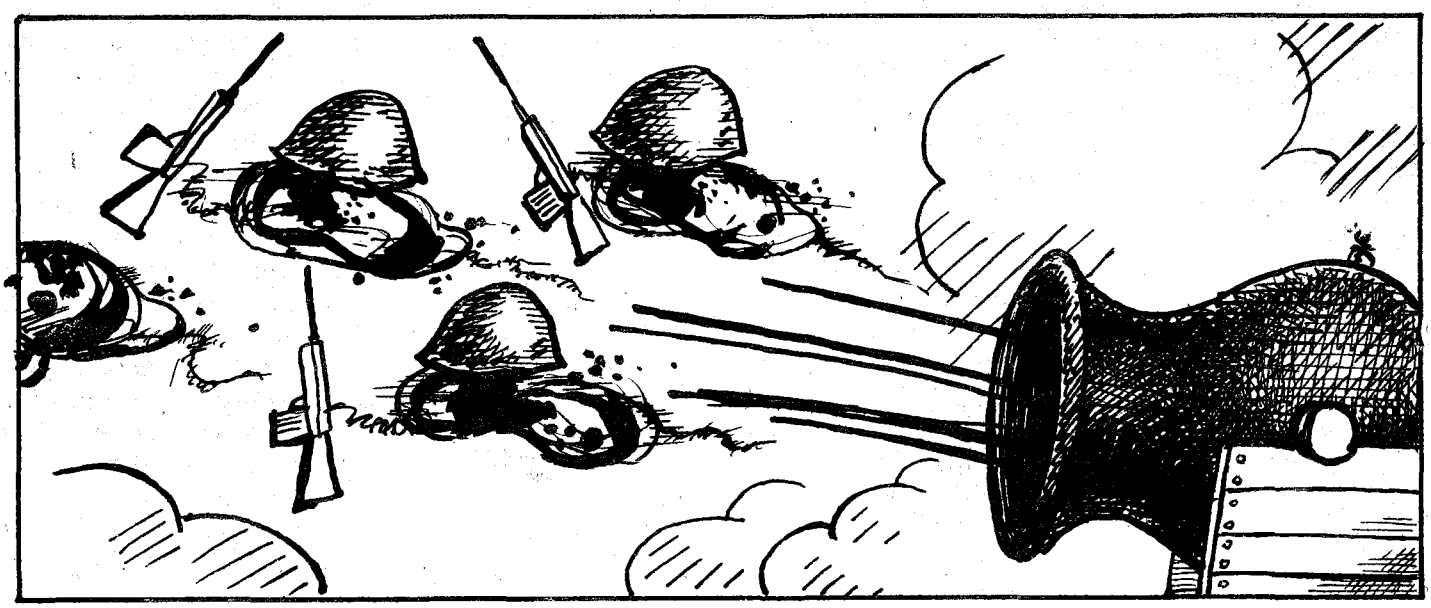
The germs were prepared for distribution by being loaded into light bulbs. Each bulb contained as many as 87.5 trillion bacilli. The bulbs were shattered on ventilator grills in the sidewalks above the stations—"When the cloud engulfed people," the report says, "they brushed their clothing, looked up at the grating apron and walked on"—or tossed directly onto the roadbed from moving trains. The experiment was a huge success. Everyone was breathing the bacteria and no one was ever aware of it.

The report remarks in passing that the bacteria are harmless. But it cites no evidence to support that claim even though it finds room to list studies about aerosols and aerial warfare, details about the number of bacilli counted at various stations and a tiresome register of subway car numbers.

The Army's conclusions are in line with the rest of its Land-of-Oz experiment. The major finding: "Test results show that a large portion of the working population in downtown New York City would be exposed to disease if one or more pathogenic agents were disseminated covertly in several subway lines at a period of peak traffic." The mind is strained to think that to reach this conclusion the Army had to expose more than a million New Yorkers to countless trillions of bacilli, at a cost of unknown illnesses, deaths and dollars.

The Army report also suggests countermeasures against an attack using the same means, including instructions for police and subway personnel to "look for signs of covert use of biological agents." (Should passengers carrying light bulbs be considered suspicious?) Another proposed countermeasure: "At critical political periods . . . doors of coaches could be locked to prevent movement of passengers between coaches." (What counts as a critical political period? Watergate? the Falklands crisis?) A final proposal suggests "immunization of key personnel with vaccines available for potential biological agents." (What about all the passengers?)

As to the bacteria used in the subway test: how dangerous is *Bacillus subtilis*? It is dangerous indeed if one happens to be allergic to it, or is very old, very young, very ill or very anything that classifies a person as a compromised host. Might such people have been riding the subways? Of course.



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But beyond that, the exposed commuters became carriers, and took the bacteria with them as they traveled to their homes, to their offices or to hospitals to visit elderly relatives.

One charming quality about *Bacillus subtilis* is that it can take on a nearly indestructible form as a spore, developing an armor-like coat that allows it to survive for a century or more. The *Bacillus subtilis* that was deposited in the subway system was in spore form. One may doubt whether, amid the dirt and chewing gum, a few trillion extra germs would bother anyone. But it is jarring to realize that most of the bacteria dropped in 1966 are still there and may remain there into the second half of the twenty-first century.

If few specialists now think that poses a danger, few in 1950 guessed that *Serratia marcescens* would turn out to be a hazard thirty years later. In the late 1970s, doctors in the San Francisco area reported a surge of infections and deaths caused by *Serratia marcescens*. Dr. John Mills of the University of California Medical Center estimated that the occurrence was five to ten times the national average. He wondered whether the 1950 Army test "could have seeded the Bay Area environment" with germs. We may be asking similar questions years from now about the New York City test.

It is not likely that the people who run our biological warfare program, however, will be asking such questions. They seem to be quite sanguine about vulnerability tests.

Larry Ware, the chief of scientific information at the biological warfare laboratories at Fort Detrick, has a soft voice tinged with Southern gentility. A microbiologist who has been at Fort Detrick since the early days of the open-air tests, he remains a strong supporter of the program. In a recent interview he made clear that people should not be disturbed by such tests.

Ware's optimistic views, not surprisingly, parallel those of Dr. Phillips. "These organisms have never been known to infect man," says Ware. *Serratia marcescens* might cause "some debilitation" in a terminally ill patient, he allows, but certainly cannot be considered pathogenic.

Ware does not acknowledge that further bacterial spraying is being contemplated, but "of course we can't tell all of our secrets." He tries to be reassuring. "You are far more at risk riding the buses in Philadelphia, or Washington, D.C., or New York City than you would be in those areas where we had exposed the community." After a thoughtful pause he explains: "Because when you get on the bus in Philadelphia or New York, you're going to be riding with a bunch of people—the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the blacks, the lower-class Irish and all these people—that may have tuberculosis and never know it, and be coughing in your face, and end up exposing you to a far more serious type of organism than what was being sprayed about in the air."

Ethnic considerations aside, Ware's comment overlooks a fundamental ethical consideration. People should be allowed to choose what kind of air they breathe. They should not be the unwitting recipients of however many trillion bacilli the Army may decide to deal out to them. □

The Right

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

□ François Mitterrand in France and Andreas Papandreou in Greece stunned everyone by winning substantial victories, and while both of their governments have had their troubles, neither has experienced the horror scenarios written by the right.

□ Olof Palme regained power for the Social Democrats in Sweden, and he seems determined to put into place a scheme by which the unions would gradually take control of the biggest corporations.

□ Reaganomics went into decline, failing to produce its promised growth and leading to widespread predictions of a Democratic resurgence in 1982, which has already been foreshadowed by the defeat of conservative Democratic gubernatorial candidates in the Massachusetts and New York primaries.

□ Menachem Begin finally brought a modicum of unity to Israel, but it was unity around the demand for his resignation.

□ Helmut Schmidt masterminded a brilliant *coup de théâtre* by isolating the German Free Democrats in such a way as to undermine the autonomy of the new Christian Democratic government, dooming the possibility of a sharp turn to the right.

□ In Spain, the Socialists under Felipe González show every sign of coming to power in the next election.

The failure of the right should in no way be taken as evidence of a shift to the left, for all parties in power are going through a phase of impotence and rejection. But when discontent with conservative policies ranges all the way from Sacramento, where Jerry Brown is returning from political limbo, to Jerusalem, where Begin and Sharon appear determined to bring their opposition to power, something worthy of comment is taking place. The right, after all, has more than enough money. It went through a period of ideological retraining, teaching its intellectuals to be more modern, less abrasive and eccentric. It did not lack self-confidence, proclaiming itself the inheritor of a popular mandate wherever it came to power. Its message—that there are limits to the welfare state and universal unease with big government—was bought by the media and enshrined into cliché.

Why, with everything in its favor, has the right performed so badly? At least four explanations suggest themselves.

First, to a greater degree than is generally appreciated, the right cannot govern for very long in a society that is both democratic and capitalist. Conservative governments made sense in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when universal suffrage did not exist, working classes were weak and unorganized, and production was essentially local. But no one, least of all the conservatives, has figured out what it

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means to experiment with a right-wing agenda when 86 percent of the electorate—the figure that turned out in recent elections in the West German state of Hesse—cares enough to register its opinions. Moreover, modern, organized, bureaucratic capitalism is a far cry from the market-based chaos out of which it grew. It demands an active state, a degree of unionization (at least in its monopoly sector) and a program of economic stabilization. Conservative nostalgia cannot transcend the material realities of the societies it tries to organize.

Conservative economic programs in an age of state capitalism are based on an explosive combination of pain and hope. Accept pain now, the right wing suggests, and with faith your life will improve. Cutbacks in social services, higher tax burdens for those least able to afford them and increasing rates of unemployment are, it is claimed, the necessary price to pay for reindustrialization and eventual prosperity. Such an agenda can work only if a strong tradition of religious concern is accepted by all, for in the austerity of its vision, the conservative agenda bears a strong similarity to Calvinist sermons about luxury and laziness. In the United States, perhaps the most rhetorically religious country outside of the Persian Gulf, the conservative message has at least had a hearing. In more secular environments, it runs directly counter to the hedonism and the taste for immediate gratification so characteristic of modern capitalism.

One cannot ask people to enjoy their economic pleasure now but to postpone their political gratification until the next wave of the business cycle. Right-wing governments ask for patience, but capitalism finds patience intolerable. It expects quick results, immediate consumption, instant pleasure. The political time needed for conservative programs to work is negated by every television commercial and money market fund. Conservatives are done in by the very rhetoric that brings them to power. Neither democracy nor capitalism gives a place of value to deliberation and patience, yet those qualities are exactly what conservatives require if they are to have any chance of success.

In the absence of either capitalism or democracy, the right's program might work. The former, at least theoretically, is not as absurd as it sounds. Conservatives were not exactly overjoyed with the rise of capitalism two hundred years ago, and since then a populistic strain has been an important ideological component of right-wing governments around the world. But modern conservatives, to judge from experience, value respectability more than populism. Funded by important business firms and distrustful of pressure from below, conservatives would rather return to academia than see their populistic rhetoric taken seriously. Committed to perpetuating the domination over the economy by the largest and most powerful corporations, conservatives are unable to develop the kinds of controls over either capital mobility or narcissistic instincts that would give them the time and space to make good on their promises.

Unwilling to interfere with capitalism, modern conservatives can only place restrictions on democracy. Indeed, although the language of most conservative governments stresses economic themes, the agenda of the right is primarily political: economic austerity can work in a modern state only if political democracy is curtailed. Attacks on social spending are thinly disguised attacks on the political power of the deprived groups that won the right to receive such spending. Reassuring speeches and support for the so-called social issues are rooted in a desire to depoliticize and anesthetize mass sentiment. The right's emphasis on national security and its demands leads naturally to restrictions on the political rights that make democracy possible. Throughout the world, but especially in the United States, conservatives use the language of freedom and democracy to curb freedom and democracy. It is a trick that can work, but only for a short time and only where freedom and democracy are poorly understood. Even a slight rise in political consciousness is enough to undermine the legitimacy of the conservative alternative.

A conservative government is always in a race with time. The question is whether its economic program can work before the awareness of its political costs becomes evident. If conservatives cannot win this race in the United States, where political consciousness is archaic, they cannot win it anywhere, particularly in European societies where labor movements are strong. A conservative government in a capitalistic democracy has two strategic choices, and both of them fail. It can, as in Sweden, choose not to put its ideals into practice, in which case the voters will repudiate it for being hypocritical and unable to govern. Or it can, as in the United States, take its ideology seriously, in which case it will unify the labor movement and force back to the polls minority groups generally disinclined to vote. In short, conservative governments will either be repudiated sooner or repudiated later. Only if elections were suspended or reduced to ceremonial events, as they have been in the Soviet Union, could a conservative government hold on to power indefinitely. (In fact, one has to look inside the Kremlin to find the only important conservative regime that has been in power an entire generation or more.)

To succeed under these circumstances, conservatives in power would have to be brutally honest and remarkably courageous. They would have to face the electorate and say something like the following: "Look, we are going to propose something you will not like and will not want to accept, for it is blatantly unfair and against your self-interest. But if you trust us, we offer you the prospect of a long-term gain in your standard of living in return for a short-term sacrifice of your political rights." That language may be appropriate for editorials in *Business Week*, but it is not likely to be said on the stump, not only because it would be unpopular but also because there are few conservative politicians with enough integrity to say what they mean.

Standing in the path of such a declaration is a second factor that helps explain the retreat of the right: the inherent tendency of all conservative regimes to prefer demagogy to courage. Given the law of diminishing demagogic returns, conservatives can stay in power as long as their dishonesty is

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tolerated or overlooked, and not a moment longer.

Conservative governments lie far more than governments of any other political coloration. This is not a judgment of their venality but an analysis of the precarious situation in which they find themselves. Liberal and social democratic governments make promises to the electorate that they often have difficulty keeping. But at least there is consistency in the political ideology out of which the promises come; it is not our fault, liberals complain, when economic conditions undermine our programs or when conservatives block their implementation. Left governments, in a word, are hardly honest and truthful, but public discontent with them comes not from the belief that they cheat but from the belief that they are incompetent. Indeed, socialist and liberal governments suffer from a perception that they are too "sincere," as if being forthright were a naïve response to the demands of modern politics.

No one could accuse most conservative politicians of sincerity, Ronald Reagan's camera presence notwithstanding. Modern conservatism is structurally dishonest, for if it were to proclaim its true intentions, it would necessarily have to insult the electorate, which must be flattered. Contemptuous of the masses, conservative leaders express their rage at the average person by pandering to his or her "innate wisdom," assuming that flattery of a prejudice is the same as respect for a considered opinion. Conservative politicians are constantly struggling to control the contempt they feel for those who elect them, and when their true feelings break out—when, for example, New York City's Mayor Koch lets upstate voters know how he really feels about rural life—the public, its eyes now open, returns the contempt in kind. If Iago were a modern politician, he would be a neoconservative. Inauthenticity is at the heart of the conservative dilemma. Conservative elitism, unable to be revealed, has little choice but to be concealed.

I am aware as I write this that no politicians are to be trusted and that there is little monopoly of virtue anywhere in modern politics. (Fred Richmond, after all, is a liberal.) Nor could anyone claim that politicians of any ideological stripe are models of healthy and balanced personality development. Yet right-wing politicians possess particular character structures: aggressive, bullying, contentious, even equipped with a cultivated and often quite brilliantly timed instability. Compare the personalities of Schmidt to Strauss, Haig to Vance, Begin and Sharon to Peres, Koch to Cuomo. Consider whether you would trust men like Howard Jarvis, Australian media baron Rupert Murdoch or Denmark's convicted Mogens Glistrup.

There are reasons why contemporary conservatives tend toward public displays of apparently unstable anger, compared with the generally more private and self-destructive psychological instability of liberals. It is not easy to hold office when one must disguise one's objectives, flatter those one despises and proclaim principles opposite from those one genuinely believes. Unlike traditional conservatives comfortable with their elitism, New Right politicians in a democratic culture internalize demagogy and transform it into principle. Their rage is enormous, their behavior unpredictable, their statements outlandish, their grasp of reality tenuous.

Barely controlled rage is combined in many conservative leaders with the strictest possible dogmatism and surprisingly unbending partisanship. Modern politics is conducted by the rules of a gentlemen's club: all parties, whatever their ideology or character, recognize commonly-agreed-upon codes of deportment. Right-wing politicians rarely play by such rules. Ronald Reagan, the most recent example, has gone beyond the bounds of political theater in his backstabbing of Congress and in his attempts to blame the opposition party for the country's economic troubles. Even if such single-minded contempt for the informal rules of the game does not get him into trouble with the electorate, it undermines his support among other politicians. Indeed, one reason Reagan and Begin are in increasing political trouble is the fact that ordinary politicians do not like being made scapegoats for their leaders' failures. Both men are distrusted because they have broken the rules too easily and too often.

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I am continually surprised by how much respect for tradition is shown by social democrats and liberals and how little by politicians on the right. To be a modern conservative is generally to have undergone a "conversion experience." There are numerous politicians and intellectuals on the right who were once, like Reagan and Koch, on the left, but there are precious few leftists who were once attracted to the right. Conservative beliefs often sit uneasily upon those who articulate them, requiring constant public affirmation and reiteration of first principles. Far more than liberals and social democrats, conservative heads of state demand public adulation, repeated flattery, unswerving devotion to their ideology and total loyalty in their aides. Nixon-like paranoia is the logical result of the siege mentality brought on by the right-wing war against modernity.

The psychological instability of many conservative political leaders is actually the source, for a time, of their appeal. People vote conservative out of anger and frustration; voting for unstable personalities seems to satisfy a need to let off steam. No one votes for a liberal or a social democrat out of strong emotion; moderate leftists are elected to be colorless and steady, to clean up the damage caused by the earlier *ressentiment*. (There are, needless to say, eccentrics and unstable personalities on the left, but none of them possess nuclear weapons and only one, Qaddafi, holds state power.) When times are tough, a little right-wing instability seems like a good thing. It was a conservative President, after all, who invented the appropriately named "madman" theory of foreign policy in the wake of America's frustration in Vietnam.

While eccentric and unexpected behavior is sometimes craved, it is also often feared, and a third reason for the increasing unpopularity of the right is—in a word—its recklessness. The right, whenever it comes to power, is dangerous. Conservatism kills. Wars are far more likely to be fought these days under right-wing governments than under social democratic ones. No doubt a "successful" war, such as the Falklands escapade, can be of great help to a tottering administration, but few wars are won so cleanly. Even when military victory is clear-cut, as in Israel's aggression in Lebanon, the political risks are often excessive. One is never certain what a conservative leader will do. For a time that can be a source of political strength, but at some point it begins to frighten the electorate—and when it does, the very longings that inspired the turn to the right work against the perpetuation of conservative regimes.

There is great irony in the recklessness of contemporary conservatism. At a time when left ideologies appear to be exhausted, the right exudes self-confidence and faith. Yet whenever conservative programs are enacted, it becomes clear that the optimism of the right is based on an extraordinary, and ultimately unforgivable, hubris. Reagan's insistence that supply-side policies would unleash new productive forces was quite reassuring. He seemed to be so certain, he acted so convincingly, that we really wanted to believe he knew more than we did. Of course he knew less; not only did he have no clue as to how the economy worked but his theories were based far more on disinformation than on empirically verifiable fact. All this would have been an academic exercise, except for one thing. Reagan's charts and diagrams threw people out of work. His mistake was everyone else's pain. It is easy to be reckless, to gamble, to play the hunches, to stretch things to one's advantage, when other people will pick up the tab for your mistakes. But those who pay the costs of your recklessness are not likely to vote for you again.

As reckless as the right is in domestic policy, where the costs are economic, it is even more so in foreign policy, where life itself is at stake. Reagan treats numbers in arms control talks the way he treats them in economic policy. Facts and figures are not to be used with caution but are to be fit into a world view that calls on people to forgo present stability for dubious rewards in the future. Just as Reagan said that if we had a little recession now we would have prosperity tomorrow, he claims that if we tolerate a weeny arms race now we will have stability in weapons soon. Given the recklessness of his promises about jobs, who is going to believe his assurances about peace? One base of support for the nuclear freeze is a conservative reaction to a reckless and dangerous foreign policy. If Reaganism is conservative, then the temperate and judicious American political mind wants less and less of it.

In fairness to Reagan it must be pointed out that his recklessness is more under control than that of his fellow right-wing heads of state. After all, he only threatened to send troops to Central America; Thatcher and Begin have put their bellicosity into practice. (In the recent past, liberals like Kennedy and Johnson acted dangerously. But both showed a capacity to learn from their recklessness; no one could charge Reagan, Thatcher or Begin with experiential maturity.) Contemporary conservatives appear to have an irresistible itch to send troops somewhere—which, so long as the drama is confined to newspapers and television, most people seem to like. But, as Winston Churchill learned, those who fight the war in the present are often dumped in the future. Conservative foreign policy, based on the threat of force in an age of nuclear weapons, cannot inspire the security it offers to protect, a sure reason for its increasing unpopularity.

The major war that conservatives fight is against the twentieth century, and the fact that they cannot win it constitutes a fourth reason for the retreat of the right. Conservatives profoundly misunderstand the times in which they live, a miscalculation that becomes more apparent with every policy they attempt.

Ideas matter—that is the lesson of modern times. For all its brutality and irrationality, this century has established the principle that no government can continue in power for long if its policies are not perceived as being in the interests of those affected by them. To be sure, governments can get by with symbols and with violence; illegitimate regimes there will always be, as Poland reminds us every day. But the evidence is overwhelming that a government that does not satisfy the popular desire for its legiti-

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mation will eventually find itself trying to comprehend its repudiation.

Conservatives have developed often brilliant strategies for appealing to the electorate. They use manipulative methods—public relations techniques, slick advertising, coded language, effective symbols—far more seductively than the left. The problem is not with the right's form but with its content: all the impressive instruments it uses to convey its message cannot conceal forever that there is no message to convey. The right, to be blunt, has no credible ideas. It has not been able to figure out why capitalist democracies are in trouble, and as a result it has no solutions that might bring them out of it.

There is no question that the right understands the importance of ideas. Unlike previous periods of conservative hegemony, when anti-intellectualism and babbittry were in vogue, conservative regimes today have close ties to think tanks and benefit from the investments that corporations have made in academic and public policy institutions. What is remarkable is that, despite all the seminars, books, symposiums, newspaper columns and appearances on *MacNeil/Lehrer*, the right has come up with so little in the way of a comprehensive analysis of our malaise. There seems to be no alternative to monetarism besides a discredited flirtation with voodoo.

No conservative thinker has developed a strategy capable of dealing with a world fractured into increasingly intense rivalries. We have yet to hear a right-wing solution to the tension between free trade and protectionism, nor is there a macroeconomic program that would put people to work without creating excessive inflation. Conservatives have been unable to explain why families are in turmoil, schools in disrepair, the public infrastructure in collapse. They do not know how to restore productivity and competition. They fail to recognize existing social problems, let alone make an effort to solve them. Their policies would intensify crime and speed urban decay. They know something is wrong, but how it got that way and what could make it better—in actuality, not in campaign rhetoric—is beyond their ken.

Conservatives pride themselves on their realism, their hardheaded, antisentimental determination to tell it like it is. According to their self-image, conservatives are fed up with the wooly-headed utopianism of left-wing social engineering and offer in its place an agenda that works with, not against, human nature. It sounds appealing until it is put into practice, when the agenda proves to be as sentimental and utopian as what it replaced. Conservatives live in a fantasy land, and their only comfort is the subconscious sense that when their time in office is over, a liberal or a socialist will come along and try to pick up the pieces. The best thing right-wing parties have going for them is the fact that they generate so much opposition: if they had a free hand to put their programs into effect, not even they could survive.

One can appeal to baseness, prejudice and irrationality for only so long before one is victimized by those very appeals. In modern politics there is always an accounting, and when judgments are made, concrete results count for more than successfully stirring up resentment and hostility to outsiders. Conservatives are brilliant at coming to power, incompetent at keeping it. Unlike liberals and social democrats, when conservatives offend they offend deeply. Those who rise to power by mobilizing anger find the anger directed against them that much stronger when it finally erupts, as Spiro Agnew and Richard Nixon can testify. A Willy Brandt would never experience total repudiation, for no matter how serious his mistakes he was not contemptuous or venal. Conservatism is arrogance; performers like Ronald Reagan can hide their contempt, but only by total concentration and complete packaging. Arrogance remains the single greatest political liability in modern democracy.

Conservatives are being repudiated because they conserve so little and demand so much. One expects demands from revolutionaries because they offer utopia in return. But conservatives promise only to fill the coffers of the already rich, and for that they seek sacrifice, tolerance of their mistakes and public adoration. Their agenda is so outrageous it seems positively attractive—until the reality of its unreality sinks home. There is very little in the agenda of the left that is either appealing or workable; by raising the level of political absurdity to new heights, conservatives may do the left the dastardly deed of bringing it back to power prematurely. The left needed a generation to think through its mistakes. The right is giving it a decade.

There will continue to be right-wing governments in the world so long as liberals and social democrats are unable to come up with solutions to the global crisis. Given the level of potential anger and frustration, the right can never be pronounced dead. But for all the talk about a conservative era, for all the sense that social democracy had reached its limits and for all the sentiment against altruism in a no-growth age, the right has botched its golden opportunity. It already finds itself in the same position so recently occupied by liberals: on the defensive, apologetic, searching for scapegoats. But unlike the left, which was victimized by forces outside its control as much as by its internal flaws, the right has only itself to blame. It had the money and it took the power, but the world simply could not be squeezed into its confining and restrictive ideas. And the more conservatives try to force it, the sooner public enchantment with their alternatives will wane. □

COMING

□ Frank Donner, author of *The Age of Surveillance* and an expert on the right wing in America, on the new smear campaign against the anti-nuclear movement.

□ James Bamford, author of the newly published *The Puzzle Palace: A Report on NSA, America's Most Secret Agency*, on the government's attempts to suppress information retroactively.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

In a Gulf of Her Own

WALTER KENDRICK

A SUSAN SONTAG READER. *By Susan Sontag. Introduction by Elizabeth Hardwick. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 446 pp. $18.50.*

The absence of an American intelligentsia makes Susan Sontag possible. As our unofficial hostess of letters, she has spent more than twenty years introducing us to that exotic creature, the European intellectual. From Washington Irving to Hemingway, American ambivalence toward European culture has been a rich native topic, and Sontag has capitalized on it: she stands midway between the two continents, in what one might call the Sargasso Sea of thought. Her stance there is unique, but always a little shaky.

America's closest approach to an organized intelligentsia is the academic establishment, where ideas do get taken seriously. But ideas are a profession for American academics, and it's bad manners to talk shop at home. Outside the ivied walls, America has thousands of magazines and newspapers that are always talking about something; a few even specialize in thought. But magazine writing, in America, is a profession, too; those who practice it form no intelligentsia of the European kind, and between them and their academic counterparts a great gulf yawns. Sontag inhabits that gulf—not bridging it, but making it her own.

A fully established American figure, Sontag is ready for the archive; and so, appropriately, we have *A Susan Sontag Reader*. It's not *the* Reader—maybe there will be a sequel—but it offers a heavy sampling of her work, from her first novel, *The Benefactor* (1963), through her obituary essay on Roland Barthes (1981), all selected by Sontag herself. Ordinarily, writers are dead or incapacitated before Readers are bestowed on them. Sontag is neither—though you'd never know it from Elizabeth Hardwick's elegiac introduction, which croons of "unique talent" and "profound authority" till you can fairly smell the formaldehyde.

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There's too much of Sontag's fiction here—a harmless gesture of vanity on its author's part, but an unwelcome reminder to the reader of how dull and derivative that fiction is. Several dissertations stand to be written on the multitude of echoes, from Mann and Kafka through Borges and Barthelme, that thud through *The Benefactor*, *Death Kit* and *I, etcetera*. But for a writer whose essays have consistently touted the virtues of "pure, untranslatable, sensuous immediacy" ("Against Interpretation"), Sontag has captured remarkably little of it in her fiction. Vitality flickers here and there in the short pieces from *I, etcetera*, but otherwise her fiction is careful and serious, nothing more.

Her nonfiction, however, is always vivacious, even when its polemic is blurry and its impact has grown blunt with time. Her most famous essays are here—"Against Interpretation," "Notes on 'Camp,'" "The Pornographic Imagination," "Fascinating Fascism"—along with others that are less well known but equally provocative, such as "On Style" and "The Aesthetics of Silence." The last chapter of *On Photography* is included, along with an abridged version of an interview first published in *Salmagundi*. Everything here has been published before, some of it more than once; but now the arrangement is strictly chronological, so that you can follow (or at least look for) signs of development in Sontag's thought.

I couldn't find any, except perhaps the loss of ardency, and gain of serenity, that Hardwick notes in her introduction. But, because the *Reader* is apparently a self-portrait, the absence of a piece can be as revealing as its presence. Many of the short, early pieces from *Against Interpretation* were probably omitted because they are too slight or too closely tied to works and events that appear minor in hindsight. "Trip to Hanoi" might have been passed over for reasons of space, or because it reeks too much of 1968; but I'd rather have had it than *The Benefactor*. Without that troubled, ambivalent attempt to come to terms with herself as a "citizen of the American empire," the *Reader* makes Sontag look much more placidly detached, much more of a nabob, than she in fact has been. But this effect may very well be deliberate.

The total omission of *Illness as Metaphor* is undoubtedly so: even more clearly than *On Photography*, this little book demonstrates Sontag's inability to sustain an extended argument. Her considerable talents as a writer are confined to the fashioning of memorable phrases and elegant sentences; sometimes she can even make a paragraph hang together. But when it comes to a sequence of paragraphs, she slips and slides; and when that sequence must form itself into the larger structures that constitute a coherent book, she collapses. Her best essays are either formless by design, like "Notes on 'Camp,'" or else propped up on the ready-made structure of someone else's film, novel or *oeuvre*.

Her essay on Walter Benjamin ("Under the Sign of Saturn"), for example, is a graceful blending of biography, appreciation and criticism. For Sontag, Benjamin's life and his writing were both shaped by his "Saturnine temperament," and under that rubric she is able to move smoothly back and forth between the man and his work, producing a stylish literary portrait. Her analysis of Godard's films, though written in 1968 and outmoded now, does a fine job of extracting themes and charting continuities. The essay applies conventional methods to unconventional material (a standard tactic of Sontag's); it domesticates Godard, but it does so efficiently and with firm control.

When Sontag's subjects are less clear-cut, however, she habitually starts, stops, starts again and finally loses her way. "Camp" may be such a scatterbrained phenomenon that a shoal of fifty-eight "notes" is an appropriate form for discussing it, but even such an apparently unified essay as "The Pornographic Imagination" moves at the same jerky, uncertain pace. Sontag begins with a dubious distinction between "at least three" kinds of pornography. She then chooses one (the kind with artistic merit) and spends the next thirty pages alternately belaboring and begging the questions raised by her initial distinction. In the process, she offers an excellent analysis of *Story of O*, but when she tries to get beyond its given structure to build her own, she flounders.

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Sontag's best writing is impressionistic, and the limits of her thought are those of esthetic impressionism. *On Photography* and *Illness as Metaphor* reveal her limitations most plainly, but they hem in all her work and are more than merely formal. Her "exquisite responsiveness" (Hardwick's phrase) is genuine and often beguiling, but her responses are dictated by a time-worn understanding of the world that is no longer adequate to what the world contains. Sontag's eminence in American letters is disproportionate to the quality of her thought; she perpetuates a tradition of philosophical naïveté that has always kept America subservient to Europe and that surely should have run its course by now.

From the start, Sontag has been haunted by the nervous worry that, in modern culture everywhere, the real thing and its image are getting steadily more involved, and confused, with each other. The menace of photography and metaphorized cancer is the same, for example, as that of Leni Riefenstahl's "documentary" *The Triumph of the Will*: the image, feeding back on the real, pollutes it, so that reality, which should be known in its naked innocence, turns self-conscious, distanced and false.

In the first part of "Fascinating Fascism," Sontag elegantly debunks Riefenstahl's whole career, showing that her postwar defenders have been either naïve or dishonest in claiming that Nazism was a forgivable little detour in a beauty-seeker's journey. But the most outrageous thing, for Sontag, is Riefenstahl's claim that in *The Triumph of the Will*, "Everything is genuine. It is *history—pure history*," when, in fact, the 1934 Nuremberg rally that Riefenstahl's film records was deliberately staged to be filmed. It was not an innocent event at which a woman with a camera happened to be present; it was a diseased event, polluted by the awareness that future generations would mistake the imaged for the real. And this, for Sontag, is a graver vice than fascism.

Virtue is exemplified by another German product, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Hitler, A Film from Germany*. Sontag's appreciative analysis, "Syberberg's Hitler," is reprinted here as an apparent companion piece to "Fascinating Fascism." Indeed, there are both good Germans and bad ones; but the most interesting thing about the Syberberg essay is that it commends him chiefly for presenting images as images, hoodwinking neither himself nor his audience by blurring the necessary line between the representation and the real thing. Syberberg calls his film "a continuation of reality by other means," and this, for Sontag, is what all art should be.

When she tracks the strategies of images, Sontag can often be brilliant. When she gets anxious about reality, though, she gets muddled, and the muddle has grown denser in recent years. She remains blind to the paradox that, for her, reality must be full, immediate, alive and in need of no defense; while at the same time images, those pale copies of the real, are capable of draining the

THE LANGUAGE

The language among the clashing winds
and falling trees is action, unexplained
to me or to themselves and unmediated
by feeling for or against—neither
open to discussion with others
nor with themselves. That leaves me
tongue-tied and in a hurry
to secure my safety within
my house, and the trees bend
ominously towards the house
beneath the violence of the wind.

No, it's no use longing
for lyric joy, sorrow or fear. It's
no use longing for words of love
or pleading. It's simply to act
as does the tree or the wind:
to become an agent of that force
that would save my life,
and so I become impersonal to myself.
I lose sight of the mind
that thought all this. It
becomes the mind of the wind.

FOR NOW

How the zebra died in the mouth
of the tigress quickly after a brief struggle
of the legs, and then the herd went back
to feeding off the grass nearby
as the tigress and her cubs knelt
at the body as in worship
and ate their fill.

They were soon quiet and resting
on their full bellies and looking
steadily at the herd feeding itself
with its head down to the grass,
not minding the tigress nor her cubs.

It was a reassuring sight
that there was death
and that it had its place
among the living and a time
and that time had passed
for now.

David Ignatow

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real, dulling it and forcing it to call in defenders like Susan Sontag. This blindness has excluded her from all the most interesting developments in Western thought for at least the last fifteen years.

In the early 1960s, when her most controversial essays were written, Sontag might have looked avant-garde; but since then, her constant devotion to the Anglo-American tradition of genteel literary discourse has sorely outmoded her. She seems to know nothing of semiotics, deconstruction, the reinterpretation of Freud, Nietzsche, Hegel and Marx—the true leading edge of the European intelligentsia. Writers like Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva, to mention only a few of the most famous, have already had considerable impact, for both good and ill, on American academic thought. But Academe is hermetic, and the outside world has barely heard of them.

Sontag's only concession to the actual avant-garde has been her appropriation of Roland Barthes. "Writing Itself," her eulogy of him, concludes the *Reader* and is a fine example of Sontag at her most Sontagian. Barthes is an ideal subject for Sontag, because in his late work he seemed to turn away from the scary semiotic radicalism of his middle career, producing a series of gentle, impressionistic books that even Matthew Arnold would have found congenial. In Sontag's hands, Barthes becomes just another sensibility on tour; the essay is heartfelt and touching, but it represses the danger in Barthes and distorts the multifaceted intellectual movement of which he was an important part.

If the *Reader* is in fact Sontag's self-portrait, what she shows us is an unexpectedly conservative, philosophically retrograde writer whose primary function has always been domestication. She introduced American culture to several artists who would have remained obscure much longer without her aid. But in the process she also made them safe, accommodating them to a familiar vocabulary of appreciation and evaluation. That vocabulary has hardly changed since the eighteenth century. When Samuel Johnson spoke of "sensibility," the term meant something definite to him and to his limited, homogeneous audience; when Matthew Arnold used the term, he was already defending the citadel against the noisy rabble; when Sontag uses it, it means nothing except that her unanalyzed preconceptions must at all costs be soothed.

None of this would make any difference if Sontag didn't have such important influence on somebody, somewhere. I must confess, I don't know anyone who looks to Sontag for esthetic guidance. But she takes herself so seriously, and her publisher treats her with such awe, that I can only presume the existence of a vast, anonymous readership, hungry for Sontag's pearls. If these readers exist, their reverence is Sontag's only real achievement—a notable achievement, to be sure, but a far more trenchant criticism of the world of American letters than any essay she ever wrote. □

'I am a Closet of Secrets Dying'

ROBERT B. SHAW

THE LIFE OF JOHN BERRYMAN. *By John Haffenden. Routledge & Kegan Paul. 451 pp. $22.50.*

It is customary for poets' reputations to be revalued downward after their deaths. John Berryman is no exception to the rule: ten years after his suicide, his place among the poets of his time is unsettled. It would be pleasant to believe that John Haffenden's biography will turn the attention of readers back to Berryman's brilliant, problematic works, but the story it tells is so monumentally depressing that it may scare off more readers than it wins for its unruly, ravaged subject.

The Life of John Berryman is an attempt at that intimidating thing, a definitive biography—if accumulation of data can make an account definitive. "I have been partial less to explanation than to information," Haffenden remarks in his introduction; and the pile of facts that follows is something like an African anthill, overblown and teeming and uncomfortable for anyone but ants to be inside. Before detailing my misgivings, I must grant that on a basic level the book is bound to prove essential to students of Berryman. No one is likely to give a more complete version of the often traumatic events of Berryman's childhood and early youth, which reverberated in his writing to the end. Haffenden is equally punctilious in tracing the balance of Berryman's life, and here, too, the sheer mass of information is imposing. What Haffenden has written is in this way less a book than a "source" to be rifled by notecard-shuffling graduate students.

One wonders, however, what those students will make of the peculiar orchestration Haffenden's style gives to his cheerless mass of facts. Although capable of plain, serviceable prose, he is prone to lurch without warning into murky grandiloquence. Referring to the strains that drove Berryman's father to shoot himself, he writes, "Registering an inevitable sense of disengagement, Smith's state of mind rapidly deteriorated." Berryman's maternal grandmother, deserted by her husband, "lived a proud forsakenness for several decades." A colleague of Berryman's, after discovering that the poet had attempted to seduce his wife, followed him home and "traduced him for the affront." (The reader almost feels like translating: "told him off" would do nicely here.)

In the course of defending his preference for information over explanation, Haffenden sniffs at biographers who select facts to fit paradigms: "I have often felt that determinative interpretations of a biography are postulated on the supposition that the dense pattern of a real life should yield to meaning as simple as a rhumb; they sell the reader short by trimming texture to a thesis." As simple as a *what*? I'm all for preserving the texture of whatever life is under discussion, but a biography's *verbal* texture is another matter, and Haffenden's bargain-basement Henry James effects could have been trimmed severely, to the distinct advantage of his narrative.

Once one gets past Haffenden's disinclination to give his material much shape and his breathtaking elevations of diction, the story he tells is an absorbing one. It is also relentlessly disturbing. When Berryman was 12, his father escaped from money worries and an impending divorce by shooting himself beneath his son's bedroom window. "Thereafter," as the poet put it in one

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of his Dream Songs, "nothing fell out as it might or ought." While Haffenden duly notes Berryman's triumphs—his scholarly honors at Columbia and Cambridge, the Pulitzer Prize and other awards and fellowships that his poems finally brought him—the record seems chiefly one of difficulties, many of which were magnified by a habitually despondent outlook. Berryman was bullied at prep school to the point where he attempted to throw himself in front of a train. Emotional conflicts ravaged him: as a young man, he would drop to the floor in a faint during moments of stress. (At least one doctor diagnosed him as an epileptic, but Berryman eventually recognized his blackouts as hysterical symptoms.) His professional life was insecure; he was over 40 when he received tenure at the University of Minnesota. As he aged, the erratic behavior induced by his neuroses merged with that induced by alcohol and drugs. His alcoholism brought with it a host of physical ailments, not to mention its toll on his brain. Two of his three marriages failed, and the third was severely tried; the distractions of his compulsive adulteries did not much lessen his distress. Several of his closest friends, admired fellow artists, died prematurely, making him "cross with god who has wrecked this generation."

But the worst thing Berryman had to endure was the enchaining attention of his mother. Her smothering affection delayed his emotional development, and she seems, despite her son's violent efforts to assert his independence, to have remained the dominant woman in his life. After his return from Cambridge, heedless of his psychological discomfort, she capitalized on her youthful appearance by introducing him to her business associates as her brother. Her incessant talk when they were together sparked histrionic quarrels; when they were apart she carried on their love-hate relationship through letters. Haffenden, who has read these, loses his patience in discussing them; he describes one as "five single-space typewritten sheets of apologetics: melodramatic, specious, proud and pained."

Her husband's suicide, of course, was as disturbing for her as for her son, and lay behind much of her emotional exploitation of him. To the last, she insisted that the death was an accident, not a suicide, and the guilt she refused to accept for contributing to her husband's despair her son bore vicariously

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for her. In answer to Berryman's queries about his father's death she burdened and bewildered him with contradictory, ever more embroidered versions of his last days. Haffenden's wariness of explanation goes out the window in regard to Berryman's mother. He thinks the poet's self-lacerating mythologizing of his father's death far in the past was a way of deflecting his attention from his hostile feelings toward his mother, which were all too present throughout his life. Inescapable, she was living across the street from him in Minneapolis when he did away with himself. Haffenden's final word on her implies that her lifelong conduct toward her son, if not her proximity at the end, was a major force among the many that led to his jump from the bridge: "She had exploited his feelings for her own private causes, one of which must have been an unconscious wish to take revenge upon her husband. Berryman, the agent of her compensation, became its victim."

One closes this book thinking it was miraculous that Berryman made it to 57. He might have withstood his misfortunes even more successfully if he had not trapped himself in the agonizing role of *poète maudit*. He was such a connoisseur of disaster that he was largely incapable of spontaneous or lasting delight. According to Haffenden, his voluminous diaries dwell on gloom and apprehension, even at times when he had genuine cause for happiness. As Haffenden puts it, "His cast of mind construed affliction as a creative stimulant," i.e., he had to be miserable in order to write. He seems to have fallen prey to this dubious esthetic as a young man. A brief but dismaying stint selling encyclopedias door to door in Harlem while he was between academic jobs led him to reflect, once he had been hired at Princeton, that he had gained "the authority of suffering." After augmenting that authority over more than twenty years, he was still willing to say in an interview, "I do feel strongly that among the greatest pieces of luck for high achievement is ordeal . . . the artist is extremely lucky who is presented with the worst possible ordeal which will not actually kill him." To which one is tempted to add: Until it does, when the luck has run out. This is an appalling, ruinous belief, and the later poems in which it is expressed with no saving irony are not Berryman's better ones.

I wish Haffenden had more to say about the poems, both the good ones and the not so good. He confines himself mostly to the poet's themes, in order to show that they were dictated by obsessions and inner conflicts. He relates, for example, the theme of childbearing in *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* to Berryman's ambivalence toward the possibility of parenthood during his first, childless marriage. Again, as many critics have done, he discusses the "irreversible loss" that plagues Henry, Berryman's alter ego in *The Dream Songs*, in relation to the death of the poet's father. But since these were not concerns Berryman had to hunt for—he lived with them daily—it would be more interesting to know how he developed the craft to give them such amazing lyrical and dramatic embodiment.

Berryman was not by any means precocious as a stylist; his early poems are stiff and derivative. To have sustained the controlled, ceremonious rhetoric of a poem the length of *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* was for him an extraordinary feat. Even more extraordinary was his creation of the utterly original idiom of *The Dream Songs*, an elastic argot that equally accommodates Paterian elegance and minstrel-show sass. How did a man near 40 transform himself from an earnest versifier to a poet of unique power and daring? Writing was the most important part of life for Berryman, and a biographer who fails to scrutinize his stylistic development has shirked a primary responsibility. James Atlas's book on Berryman's doomed and gifted friend Delmore Schwartz is one model of how art and life can be brought meaningfully together in a literary biography. It is not that one wants the biography to have been a critical commentary (Haffenden has in fact already published such a book) but that the life story seems impoverished and opaque without a close view of Berryman's growing strength and individuation as an artist.

It is clear, for example, that Berryman's handling of language gained freedom and force as he discovered the manifold uses of personae: first Anne Bradstreet, the pioneer poet of the inhospitable New World, and next, nearer to him, Henry, "a white American in early middle age sometimes in blackface, who has suffered an irreversible loss." The earliest hints of this discovery lie as far back as "The Nervous Songs" of 1945, a set of lyrics for assorted disturbed characters, about which Haffenden could have said a good deal more. Berryman's fine essay of 1949 on Pound, in which he discusses the older poet's use of personae to explore his principal subject, "the life of the modern poet," is surely relevant as well.

In the same essay he praised Pound as "one of the wittiest poets who ever wrote," and it may be that Berryman's serious use of his own ferocious comic gift contributed as much as anything to his poetic advance. Berryman's range of comic effect in *The Dream Songs* is as broad as that of his language. It moves from the buffoonery of sexual farce to the skewed wit, heartbreaking when analyzed, of dreams that mock the conscious mind's defenses. Has anyone sufficiently complimented Berryman for having written the one American long poem that is fun to read? His biographer tells us that for Berryman, "it took only the slightest shift of mind for brilliant gaiety to gall." If that is so, the fact that he became, in Robert Lowell's phrase, "this great Pierrot," at once evoking tears and laughter, represents a heroic reach of imagination.

Haffenden never met Berryman, and it is thus not his fault that his frequent references to the poet's charm and funniness are overshadowed by the darker aspects of his character. Misbehavior, of course, makes for more memorable anecdotes than does courtesy or kindness, and Haffenden is dependent on other people's memories. It is good that Berryman's first wife, Eileen Simpson, should have recently published her memoir, *Poets in Their Youth*, which brings a generous warmth to its portrayal of Berryman. (To judge from the notes on sources, Haffenden seems not to have talked with Simpson, and their two books do not significantly overlap.)

Some things Haffenden has done quite well. He rightly stresses the large place academics had in Berryman's life. Teaching was not for him the peripheral activity it is for many poets but a passion he indulged to riveting effect in the classroom. As Haffenden reminds us, Berryman had serious claims as a Shakespearian scholar, and his book on Stephen Crane is something of a cornerstone. His occasional criticism, collected in *The Freedom of the Poet*, attests to his acumen in explicating texts, at times with an intensity that matches that of his mentor, R. P. Blackmur.

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If one overlooks the irritating stateliness of Haffenden's prose, it is moving to read of Berryman's love for his children, of his too-belated effort to cure himself of alcoholism and of his recovery, shortly before his death, of the religious faith he had lost when his father killed himself. "I am a closet of secrets dying," Berryman wrote in *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet.* Now that this biography has brought so many of those secrets to light, one can see that the rag and bone shop of this poet's heart was no fouler than most. It is enough to say that his kindness, often lavished on others, did not extend to himself. The secrets of his art are more elusive than any that encumbered his life, and they remain to be investigated by a reader whose ear is attuned to their distinctive music:

Hé would be prepared to live in a
world of Fáll
for ever, impenitent Henry.
But the snows and summers grieve &
dream;

thése fierce & airy occupations, and
love,
raved away so many of Henry's
years
it is a wonder that, with in each
hand
one of his own mad books and all,
ancient fires for eyes, his head full
& his heart full, he's making ready
to move on. □

Workers Disunited

JOSHUA B. FREEMAN

SEGMENTED WORK, DIVIDED WORKERS: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States. *By David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards and Michael Reich. Cambridge University Press. 294 pp. $34.50. Paper $9.95.*

WORK AND POLITICS: The Division of Labor in Industry. *By Charles F. Sabel. Cambridge University Press. 326 pp. $24.95.*

As the worldwide recession drags on and on, one naturally wonders whether we are simply in a particularly deep trough in the business cycle or have entered a more fundamental crisis. In either case, why has the response of industrial workers been, with a few exceptions, so weak and defensive? And what will the industrial world look like when (or perhaps if) the global economy picks up again? In seeking to answer these and other questions, the authors of these two studies have turned to an examination of the heart of industrial life: the labor process itself.

David Gordon, Richard Edwards and Michael Reich are among a number of radical economists who over the last decade have argued that the apparently unified labor markets of capitalist economies actually consist of several separate sectors. At the core are large, capital-intensive, monopolistic companies that employ long-tenured, well-paid, unionized workers—in this country usually white males. On the periphery are small, highly competitive firms that operate in unstable markets and employ transient, low-paid, nonunion workers—often women and minority groups. In between are all sorts of hybrids: nonunion subdivisions of major corporations, technically sophisticated small shops and so forth.

If these economists are right, workers are divided, not only by their daily circumstances but by the whole pattern of their working lives: opportunities for training and advancement, systems of managerial control, job security, working conditions and, of course, remuneration—all vary greatly from sector to sector. At least in the short run, workers' interests and the strategies they use to promote them may well diverge from one sector to another. Furthermore, labor-market segmentation and racial and sexual discrimination reinforce one another, so that inequality is deep-rooted and routinely perpetuated. Add ethnic and cultural divisions, and the result is a fragmented working class, unable at most times to coalesce politically or to develop programs of its own.

Although variants of this view have been around for some time, it is far from fully accepted by economists, let alone by politicians and policy makers. In *Segmented Work, Divided Workers,* Gordon, Edwards and Reich try to bolster their case by extending their analysis backward, reinterpreting the history of American industry and labor in the light of labor-market divisions

Joshua B. Freeman teaches labor history and American studies at the College at Old Westbury, SUNY.

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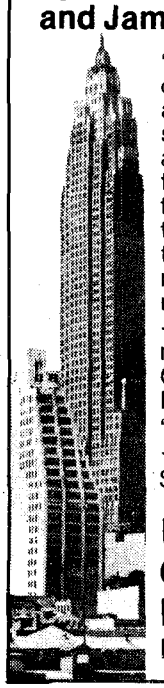
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and coincident systems of managerial control. What they have come up with is an elaborate scheme of historical periodization. According to the authors, there have been three stages of capitalist development, each of which had various substages and ended in crisis when its "structure of accumulation"—the political, legal, labor-relations and marketing arrangements under which individual companies operate—no longer provided a profitable environment for investment. After long experimentation and intense labor strife, new arrangements emerged.

First there was a period of "proletarianization," when a work force of wage laborers was created. Entrepreneurs financed production and marketed products, but by and large they let their skilled workers organize the shop-floor operations. By the late nineteenth century, however, employers increasingly sought to break the power and appropriate the knowledge of these same skilled workers in order to introduce new production techniques, weaken craft unions and lower labor costs. The result was a period of "homogenization," when skill levels were reduced through technical and organizational innovations. Anti-union campaigns, the minute subdivision of tasks, new types of machinery and the assembly line were all used by management to create a mode of production that for the most part required only semiskilled workers. This in turn led to new problems for management: most important, the blunting of once-sharp skill differences among workers helped to lay the basis for the explosion of industrial unionism in the 1930s and 1940s. In our own era, the period of "segmentation," management has tried to redivide the work force. At the same time, management has kept core-sector workers in line by means of rules, incentives and promotion ladders (often worked out in collective bargaining) as well as by introducing machines that set the pace and measure the output of their operators.

Although somewhat mechanical, this analytic framework allows Gordon, Edwards and Reich to integrate the history of economic development with the history of working-class activism. The synthesis of so much material is useful and provocative, even though much of it is familiar. Still, the book has problems. On some issues, too little is said. Except for the most recent period, there is almost no discussion of small-scale manufacturing, making it difficult to assess whether the gulf between the core and the peripheral sectors emerged only in the modern era, as the authors contend. The discussion of the labor movement is also sketchy. Beyond that, many of the interpretations presented are open to question.

For instance, Gordon, Edwards and Reich maintain that between the turn of the century and the Depression, the power of foremen increased as they were given greater discretion over job assignments, promotions and layoffs. Others have more persuasively argued the opposite—that after 1900, personnel and planning departments, seniority systems and company unions *diminished* the power of foremen by introducing the rule of law. (Thus when the economic collapse of the 1930s undercut these changes, workers believed that their customary rights were being violated, and this conviction became a major impulse toward unionization.)

Even if one accepts the authors' basic argument, a fundamental problem remains. For Gordon, Edwards and Reich, just as for Adam Smith, workers and capitalists alike are economic rationalists who operate out of enlightened self-interest and whose end is accumulation (and sometimes power). This is a troublesome notion, for it reduces complex and changing social formations to metaphysical classes, although admittedly classes that are divided and rarely conscious of themselves as classes at all. Still, the picture presented in *Segmented Work, Divided Workers* is one of collective bourgeois and proletarian minds jostling and maneuvering through history, adopting different tactics at different moments but never varying in their essential historical character.

Charles Sabel, the recent winner of a McArthur Foundation Award Fellowship, picks up where Gordon, Edwards and Reich leave off. *Work and Politics* is an imaginative and suggestive look at contemporary Western European and U.S. industrialism, with occasional historical digressions. Sabel accepts the idea of segmented labor markets but confronts the question of why workers do what they do more directly than Gordon et al. He argues that different types of workers approach employment not only with different skills and habits but with different expectations and desires as well. Many "peasant-workers," for example—Turks work-

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ing in West Germany, say, or rural migrants in Detroit—are willing to accept unsteady, dead-end jobs as long as they are well-paying, for they have no intention of staying in the industrial work force. They hope to save money in order to buy or expand farms, set themselves up as artisans or in some other way escape factory life. Accordingly, they are often indifferent to union struggles and compliant on the job. Some may eventually become "would-be craftsmen" as they develop a taste for urban life; others may become "ghetto workers" and drift from job to job.

Sabel's point is that workers' views and actions do not simply reflect their place in the industrial hierarchy. Workers come to the market with complex cultural heritages and their own concepts of justice and honor. Using a wide range of examples—petrochemical workers in Germany and Britain, auto workers in Turin and Hamtramck—Sabel portrays the social personalities of each major subgroup within the working class, from common laborers to workers with plant-specific skills to craftsmen with generalized problem-solving abilities.

As long as the fit between jobs and workers is reasonably good, industrial peace will reign. But rarely is that the case for long. Companies are constantly redesigning the processes by which things are made, rendering some skills superfluous, others more important. Recessions, plant relocations, new competitive strategies and technical innovations may lead to the loss or downgrading of jobs. Each group of workers is therefore constantly obliged to struggle to maintain its position. Groups of workers may fight management alone; then again, they may make tacit alliances with management against other groups of workers, or band together with other groups of workers against management. The results of these struggles are unpredictable, as Sabel shows in his finely drawn account of the Italian *autumno caldo* of 1969. Here northern craftsmen, peasant-workers from the south and student radicals joined together, and what started as an effort by less-skilled workers to improve their pay, receive promotions and eliminate piecework turned into a broader-based, more far-reaching challenge to the way production was organized. When the smoke cleared, a new institution—factory councils of elected worker-delegates—had been established and the integration of southern migrants into the leftist working-class culture of northern Italy was complete.

Sabel agrees with Gordon, Edwards and Reich that the current recession marks a profound crisis in the core sector of the developed world. For a variety of reasons, some discussed in these books and some not, mass production as it is usually carried on in the United States and in Western Europe is becoming less and less profitable. Just maybe, as Sabel suggests, what he, following Gramsci, calls the age of Fordism is drawing to an end.

What comes next is anyone's guess, and the authors are wisely cautious in their speculations. However, as both studies amply show, there are no compelling *technical* (as opposed to social) reasons for production to be organized as it is. The possibilities are therefore wide indeed. Perhaps political programs can revive the Western economies with only minor changes. Perhaps a more basic international redivision of labor is occurring. And perhaps, as Sabel argues, new systems of production are already emerging, based on radically innovative organizational, marketing and technical strategies, such as those employed by the small but very advanced machine shops he visited in northern Italy. Whatever the case, the degree to which workers can overcome the deep divisions both books document will profoundly affect the shape of the industrial future and labor's place within it. □

Growing Up Gay

RICHARD KAYE

IN THRALL. *By Jane DeLynn. Clarkson N. Potter. 250 pp. $13.95.*

Novels narrated by adolescents can try the patience of adult readers interested in more than lachrymose tales of a world where dates don't show and blackheads refuse to disappear. Unless the hero is a Huck Finn and the author a Mark Twain, one's mind drifts toward thoughts along the lines of "But won't all of this get better once our hero graduates from high school and gets his own apartment?" Life, in these novels, is a battle of wills between the perfidious (all adults) and the innocent (anyone under the age of 19).

In her second novel, *In Thrall*, Jane DeLynn has given this familiar material a new twist. Her heroine, Lynn, is a brassy, cranky 16-year-old, who cuts down friends behind their backs, goes after boys she dislikes out of sheer competitiveness and throws tantrums in theaters and museums. What makes Lynn different from the mass of fictional teen-agers is that she suspects she may be a lesbian—and her fears are confirmed when she develops a terrific crush on her 37-year-old English teacher, Miss Maxfeld.

Miss Maxfeld is stern and prim but kind at the core, and she risks a great deal when she reciprocates Lynn's affections, for this is the early 1960s. While Lynn struggles with school friends who loudly wonder whether she is a "lezbo" and with the furtive gropings of her boyfriend, Wolf, the very proper Miss Maxfeld invites her over for fresh pastry and Earl Grey tea. "Good taste, or discrimination, is its own reward—after all, fresh pastry *is* better than frozen, Earl Grey tea *is* better than Lipton's tea," says Miss Maxfeld, who often sounds like a domesticated Miss Jean Brodie, introducing her students to Campari instead of fascism. Lynn and Miss Maxfeld start meeting clandestinely to talk about Braque and C.P. Snow, and this eventually leads to some hazy sex—at least, it was hazy to me.

Lynn must also contend with parents so quarrelsome and gauche they make Mr. and Mrs. Portnoy look refined. But the Portnoys were hilarious; Lynn's parents are only wooden stereotypes. Her father, Bru, is a dolt and a racist, and her mother is narrow-minded and materialistic. The rest of the family is just as bad, although there's an Aunt Lou who has a few moments of amusing eccentricity before being revealed as a sexually frustrated bore. Again and again, DeLynn shows us how wretched and mediocre the grown-up world (Miss Maxfeld excepted) seems to Lynn. When Aunt Lou invites Lynn's family to Sunday brunch at a homosexual friend's home, Lynn's mother replies,

Richard Kaye lives in Chicago and loves Sunday brunch.

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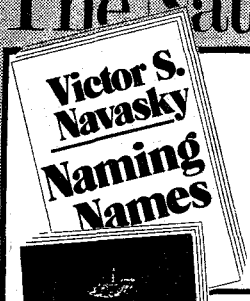

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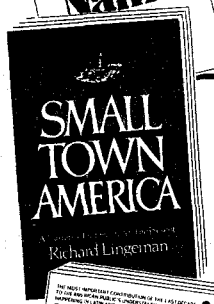

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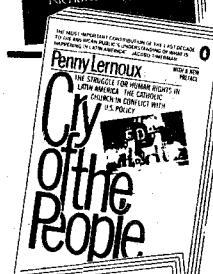

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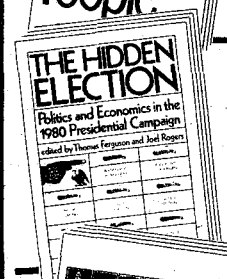

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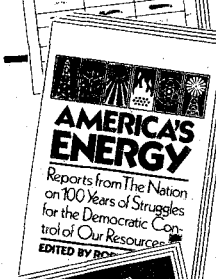

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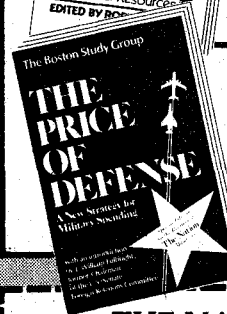

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"You know we don't eat brunch. Bru likes to put something in his mouth the minute he wakes up." Lesbianism, for Lynn, becomes less a matter of sexual preference than of good taste. Who would want any part of adults so rampantly philistine that they disdain the pleasures of Sunday brunch?

The greatest obstacle to DeLynn's love story, however, is that it's hard to imagine why a 37-year-old woman would fall for—and take so many dangerous chances with—a 16-year-old as annoying as Lynn. DeLynn does try to imbue Miss Maxfeld with some psychological complexity by making her the daughter of a rabbi. But what might have given her dimension only leads her to mouth hokey pieces of Jewish wisdom: "The Jewish culture is not a bar culture," Miss Maxfeld instructs Lynn. "It's a culture of books and music." It's as if DeLynn intended Miss Maxfeld as a reminder of just how dreary life before Stonewall was.

There are some affecting moments here, as when Lynn confesses her lesbianism to a family boarder she imagines is gay but who turns out to be only a trendy playboy and not a particularly discreet one at that. There are some good scenes, too, of Lynn amicably bickering with her school chums. DeLynn, whose first novel, *Some Do*, was to my mind richer and more engaging, might have been wiser to have written a simple story of gay coming of age, instead of this unlikely teacher-student romance.

Years ago, homosexuality was such a forbidden literary topic that readers looking for a good homosexual love story would tolerate a great deal from authors who treated the subject with sensitivity. As purple as the prose of Radclyffe Hall often was, she did manage, in *The Well of Loneliness*, to deliver a stirring narrative. Today a growing number of novelists—Rita Mae Brown, Edmund White, Andrew Holleran, Jane Rule—are writing vividly about gay relations. Now that the subject is no longer off-limits or of purely sensational value, the challenge for the novelist is, as usual, how to get the story right—how to write a novel. □

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Crossword Puzzle No. 1934

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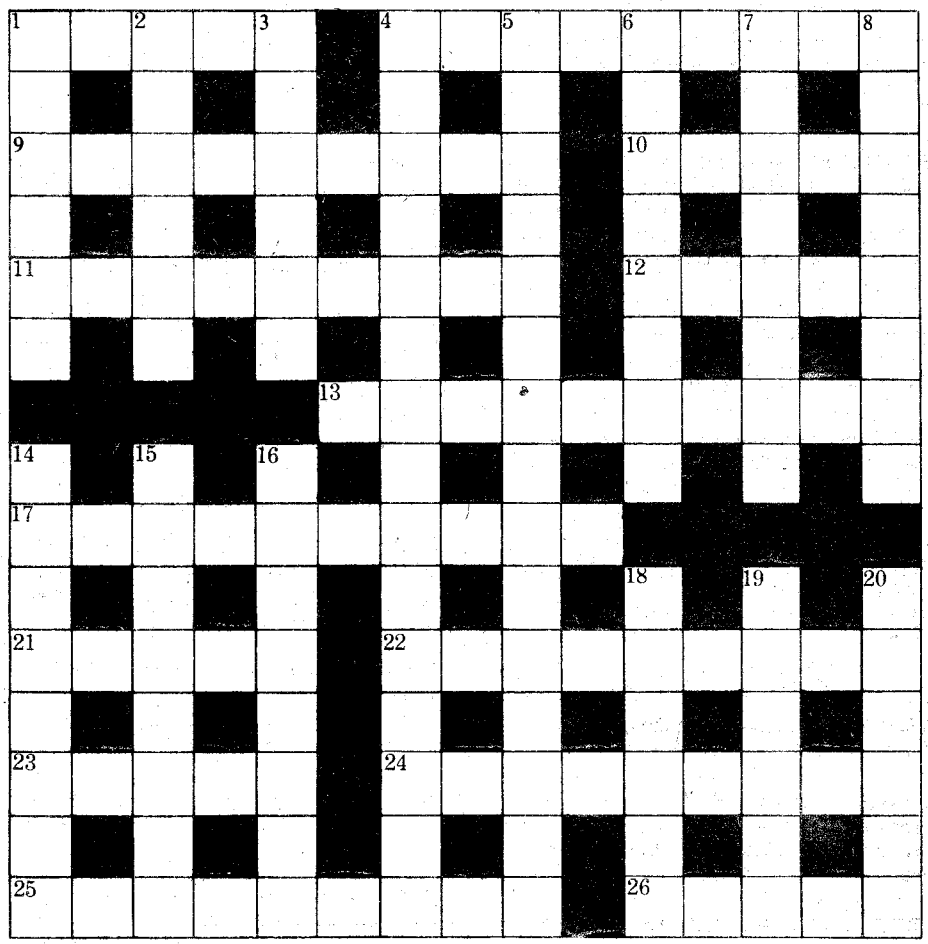

ACROSS

1 Works on the stage twirling a rope. (5)
4 Not an expensive plaything—I'm going to buy one for a song! (5,4)
9 One starts with an uncertain rate, though is finally more certain—that makes one fiscally responsible. (9)
10 Growth begun by the chief Cyclops. (He must, after this, and you'll see him, but it's a little too much!) (5)
11 The game of the majority of people. (6-3)
12 The soldier gets in free—that's firmly fixed! (5)
13 Not necessarily an eminent historian—but one is very good at something. (4,6)
17 Carries away—or at least carries. (10)
21 Just title? Very true! (5)
22 It used to be fashionable to go on one, but it makes the dog run, rat-crazy. (5-4)
23 Somewhat 16 with such a meaning. (5)
24 Assemblage of particulars, necessary to make concrete. (9)
25 Casey gets confused with locks—he might like to settle here. (4,5)
26 Those confused cultural characteristics? (5)

DOWN

1 A certain number of players get set (upset?) after a short time, in the fall. (6)
2 In this puzzle, it's 21. (6)
3 Real property, perhaps, like places where they make movies. (6)
4 One isn't wanted so. (7,3,5)
5 Having no fault, more peculiarly, you'd never recognize one! (7,8)
6 Those familiar with banks know about such things, but it brings a tear to an early Christian. (8)
7 Bind, in a sense, a broken big toe with someone like Capone mixed up in it! (8)
8 Stony, perhaps, but it's just once around to the dairy sort. (8)
14 Asterisky-y? (Resembling one in the main part.) (4-4)
15 They no longer take place at Tyburn—in the gallery rather. (8)
16 Disturbed by the tie score? Only a few understand such things! (8)
18 Is this one way to stick that notice they put at break points in the old video tape? (6)
19 How you can tell a marijuana smoker's been around? (Burning wood makes it, too.) (6)
20 Sometimes taken by religious types, soldiers and waiters. (6)

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■	C	■	A	■	R	■	N	■	H	■	O	■	P	■
B	O	O	K	■	O	F	T	H	E	■	P	E	A	S
■	R	■	E	■	L	■	S	■	H	■	E	■	R	■
C	O	N	S	O	L	E	■	F	I	S	S	I	O	N
■	N	■	A	■	E	■	A	■	G	■	■	■	L	■
W	A	L	L	E	Y	E	D	■	H	A	L	V	E	S
■	■	■	E	■	■	■	H	■	■	■	O	■	■	■
A	B	U	S	E	D	■	O	F	L	I	V	I	N	G
■	R	■	■	■	I	■	C	■	E	■	I	■	I	■
R	E	C	A	L	L	S	■	M	A	G	N	U	M	S
■	T	■	L	■	E	■	U	■	T	■	G	■	B	■
■	O	S	T	■	M	O	N	T	H	■	C	L	U	B
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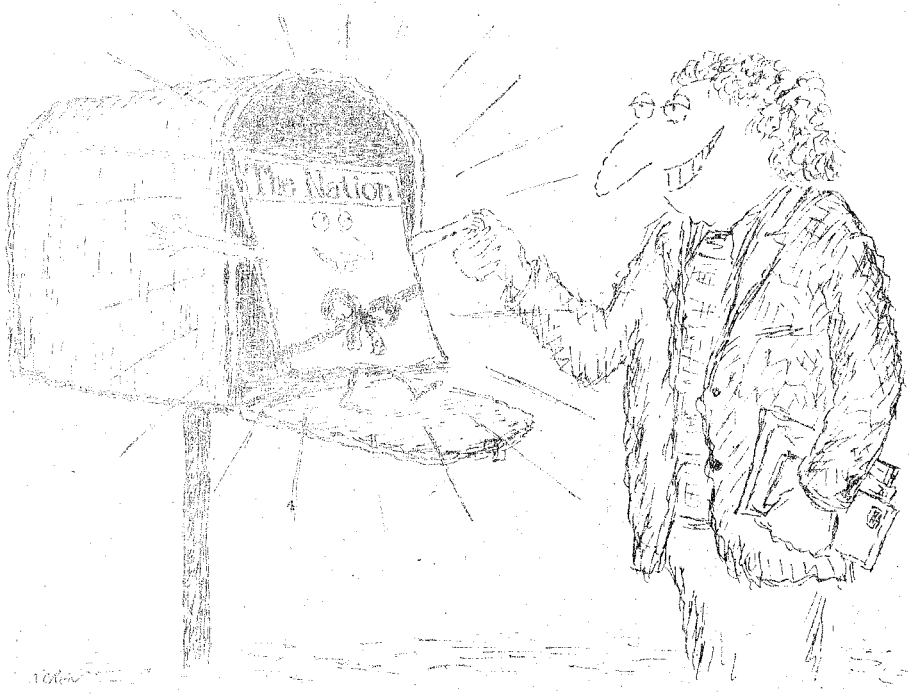

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